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Saint Olga's bloody quest for revenge

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How the ruthless Soviet dictator secured his merciless grip on power

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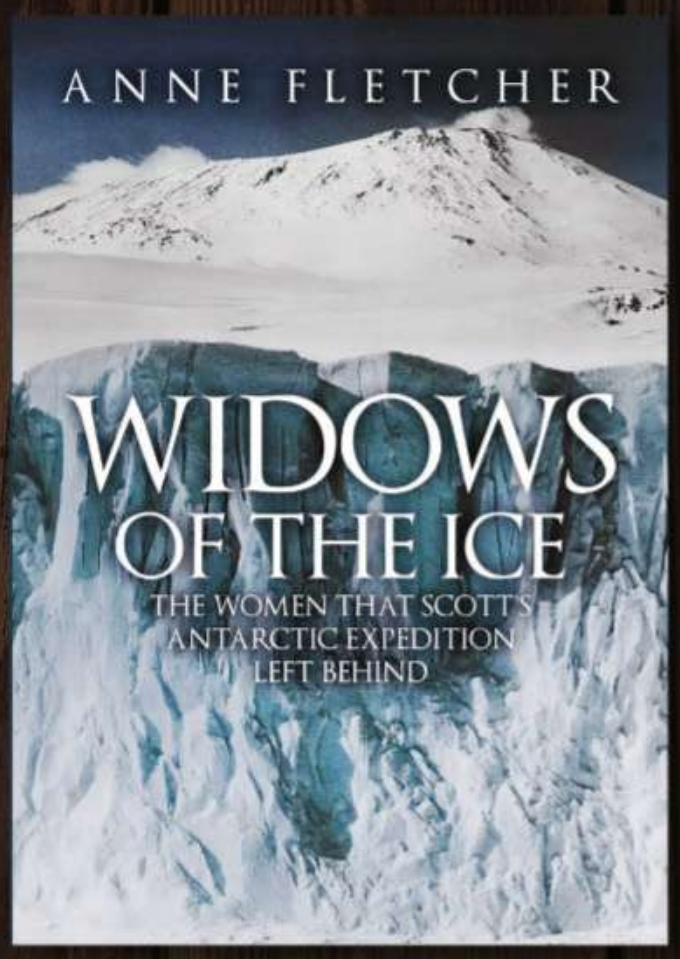
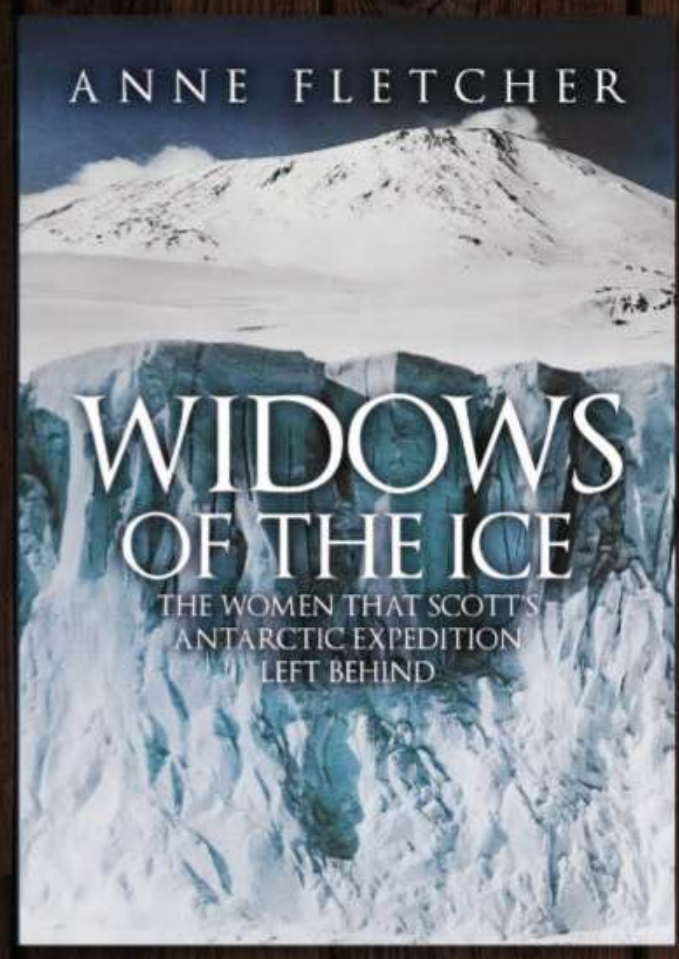


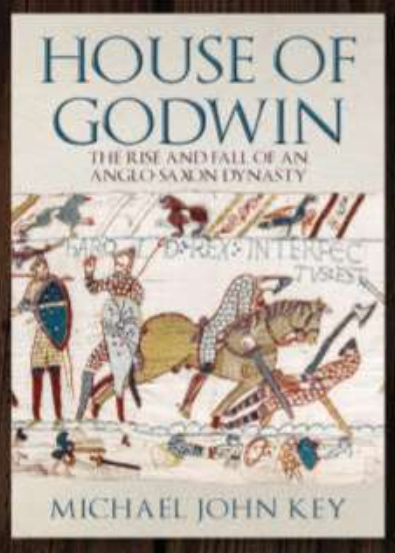
WIDOWS OF THE ICE

THE WOMEN THAT SCOTT'S ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION LEFT BEHIND

BY ANNE FLETCHER

A moving and original account of the effect of Scott's tragic expedition on the men's wives and families, who fame and history have overlooked.





THE HOUSE OF GODWIN

THE RISE AND FALL OF AN ANGLO-SAXON DYNASTY

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THE LOST BATTLEFIELDS OF BRITAIN

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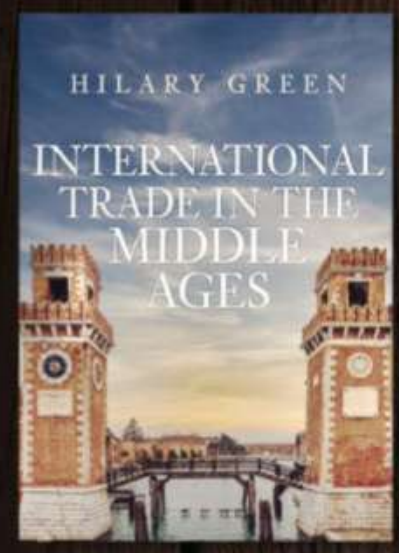
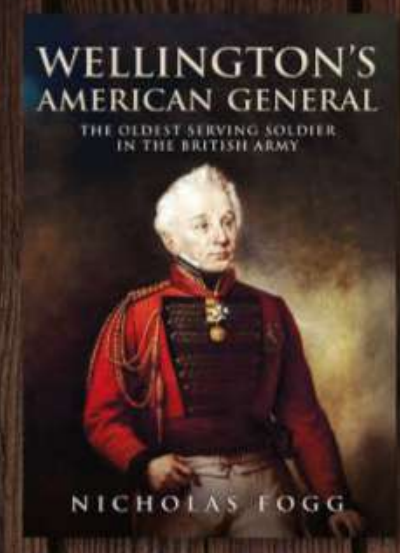


INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

BY HILARY GREEN



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SCAN TO GET OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

An anti-purge cartoon by Charles Werner that appeared in the *Indianapolis Star* in 1938

Welcome

Reading through this issue's examination of the Great Terror under Stalin in the 1930s, I couldn't help but see parallels between the conspiracy theory-driven campaign to solidify his power and examples of 'fake news' we see today. We talk a lot more about the concept of an information war these days, but to some degree it's not anything new, just more global and ubiquitous. Insidiously, it also happens to be a tactic that takes advantage of one of our great strengths: our ability to craft a story. We build stories out of the world around us and our own lives to better understand them. The study of history itself is an attempt to construct new stories from the facts to better understand the people and motivations behind them. False information can easily slip into these narratives and that's something the Soviet regime seemed to understand very well. Even if you can't make people believe your story, you can sometimes cast enough doubt to cloud the issue and make people feel uncomfortable picking a side.

We're delighted to have Dr Peter Whitewood as our guide through Stalin's purges as he digs into these issues and more. And in even more unintentionally topical features we also look at the life of Olga of Kyiv and her revenge against a rival power, as well as the history of pandemics and how they tend to end. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Jonathan Gordon
Editor

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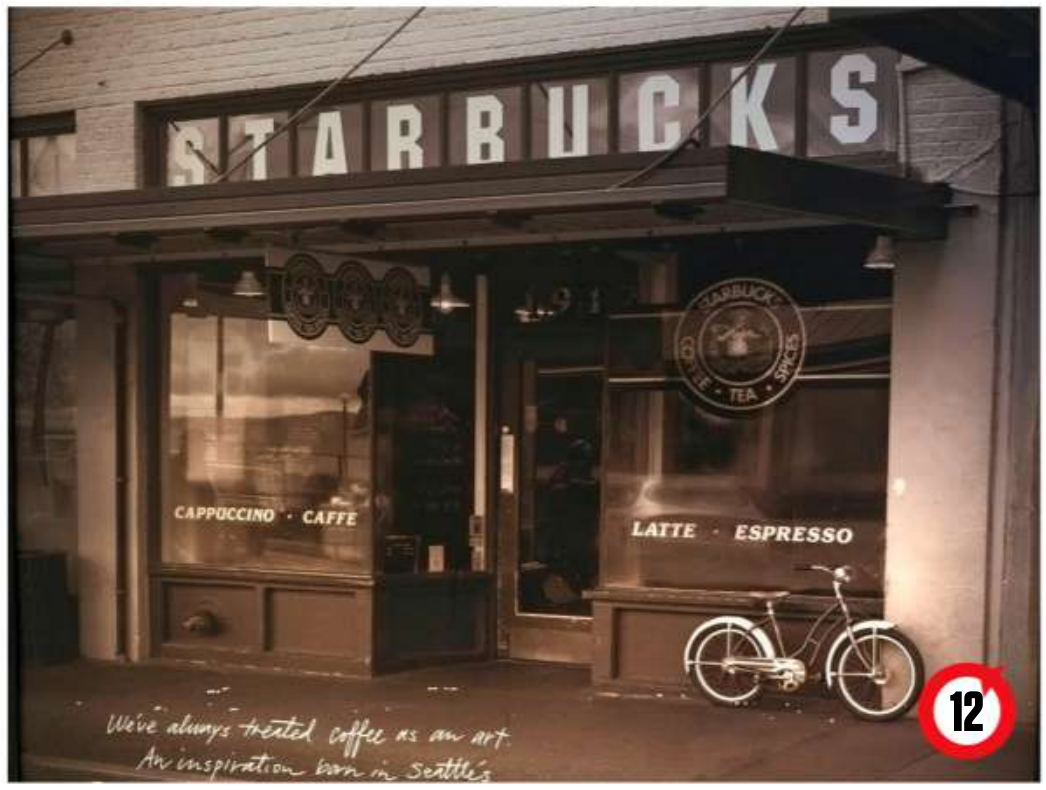

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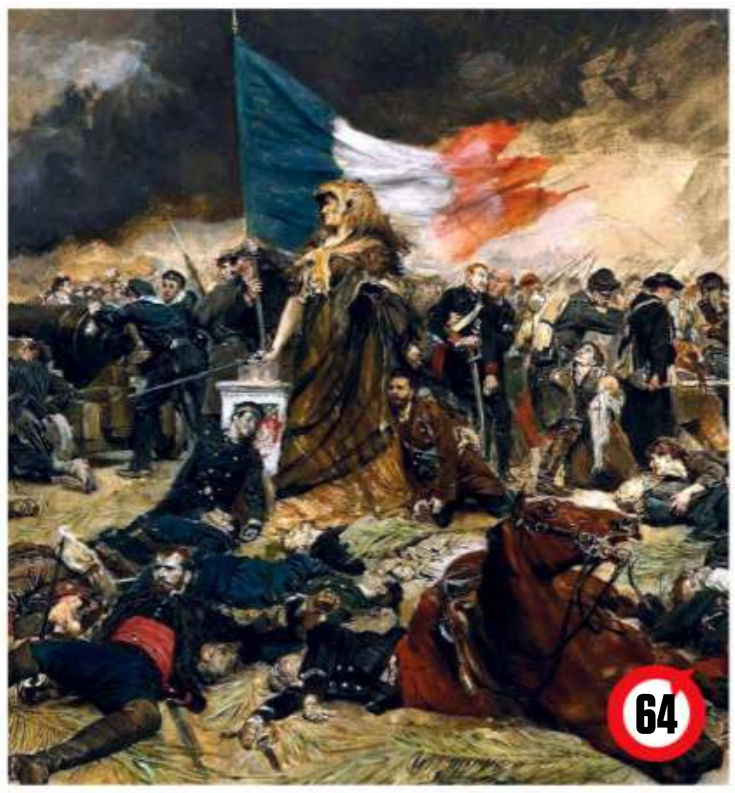

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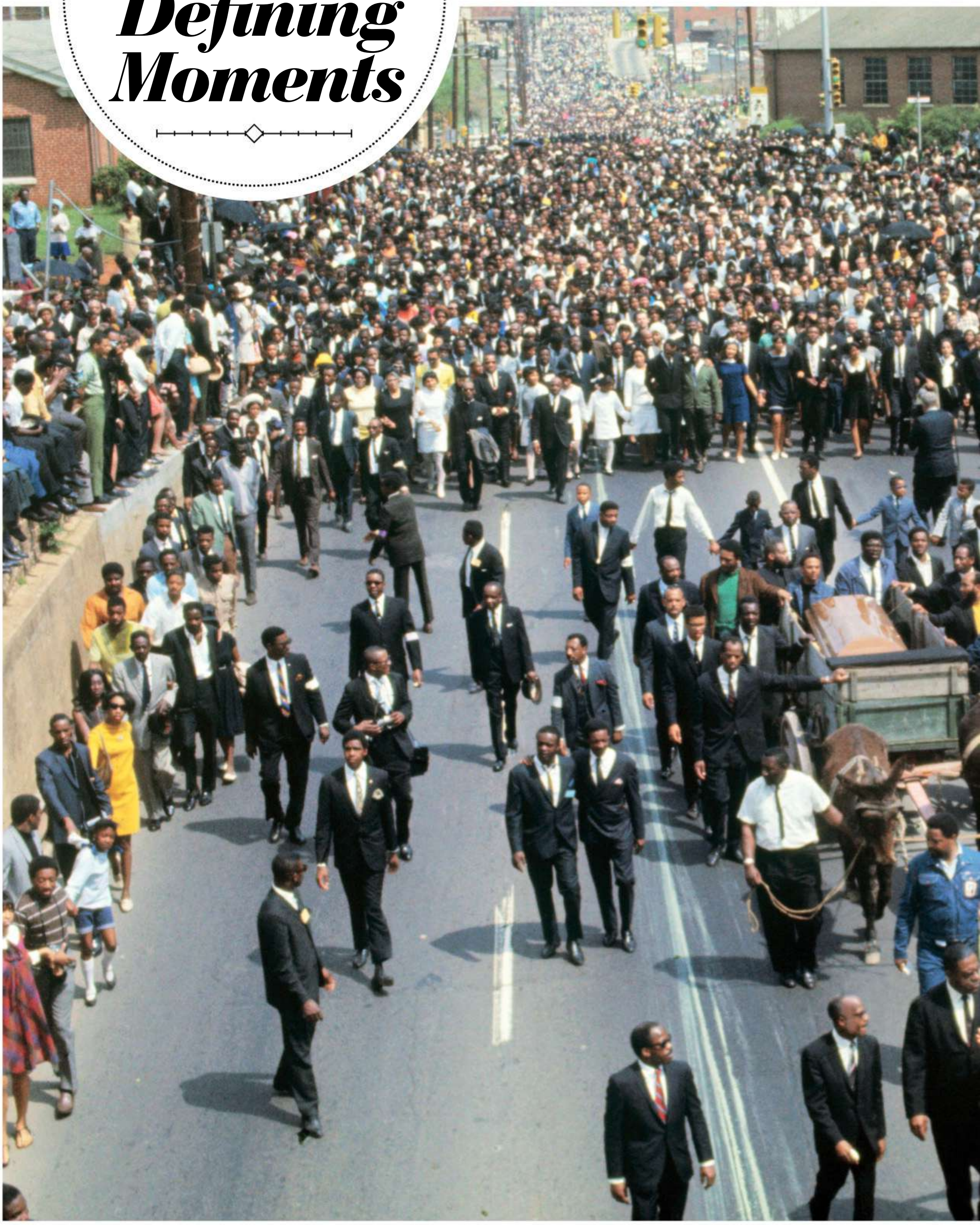

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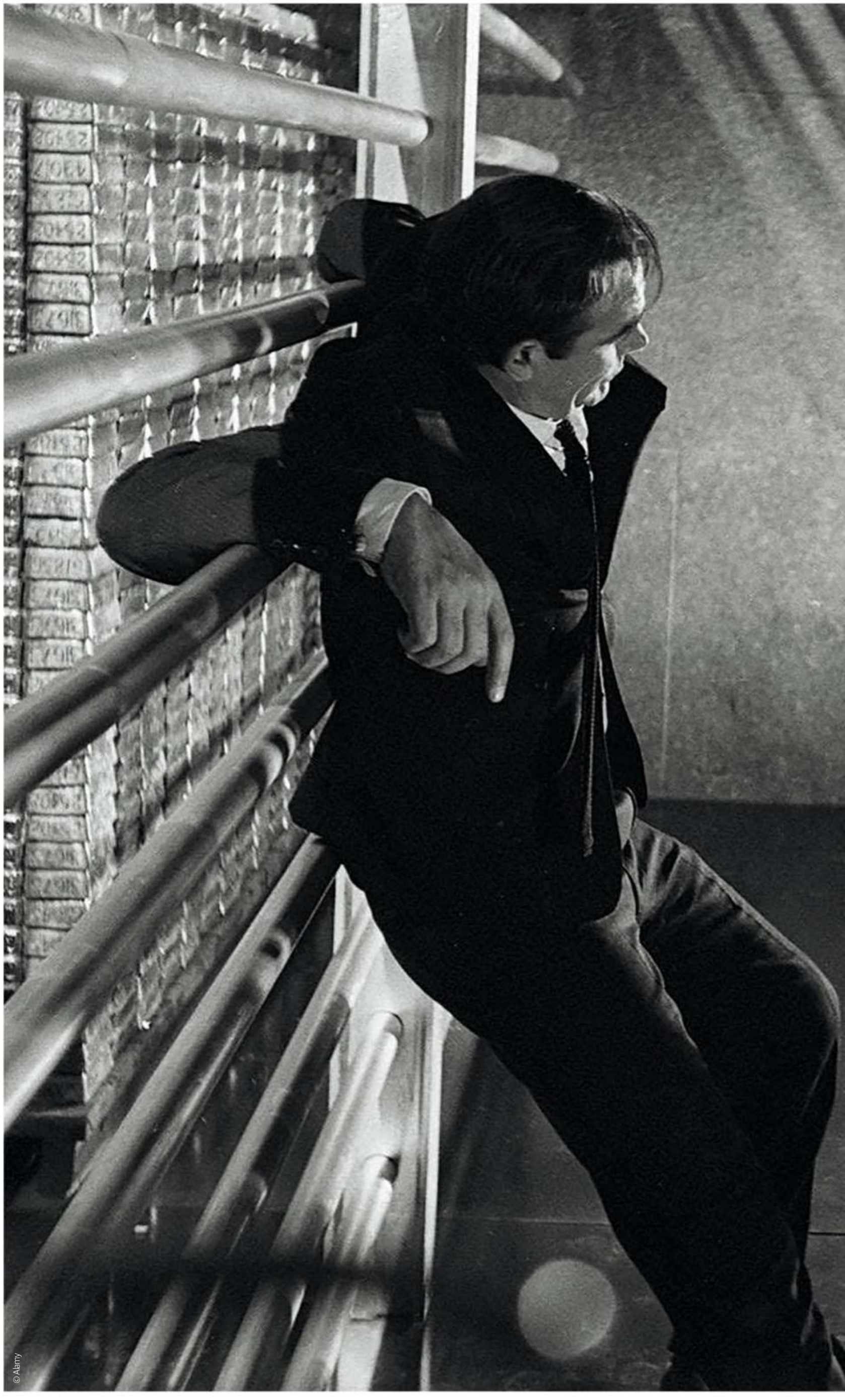
9 April 1968

FUNERAL OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JR

On 4 April, US civil rights leader and Baptist minister Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated while standing on the balcony outside his hotel room in Memphis, Tennessee. His funeral was held a week later, with 1,300 mourners attending the service and as many as 100,000 joining the 5.5km procession outside.



19 March 1964

SEAN CONNERY BEGINS FILMING GOLDFINGER

Following the success of 1962's *Dr No* and 1963's *From Russia With Love*, Sean Connery reprised his role as James Bond and arrived at Pinewood studios on 19 March 1964 to begin filming *Goldfinger*, based on the 1959 novel by Ian Fleming. Co-starring Honor Blackman as Pussy Galore, Gert Fröbe as Goldfinger and directed by Guy Hamilton, the film shattered box office records and set the gold standard for what a Bond movie could be.

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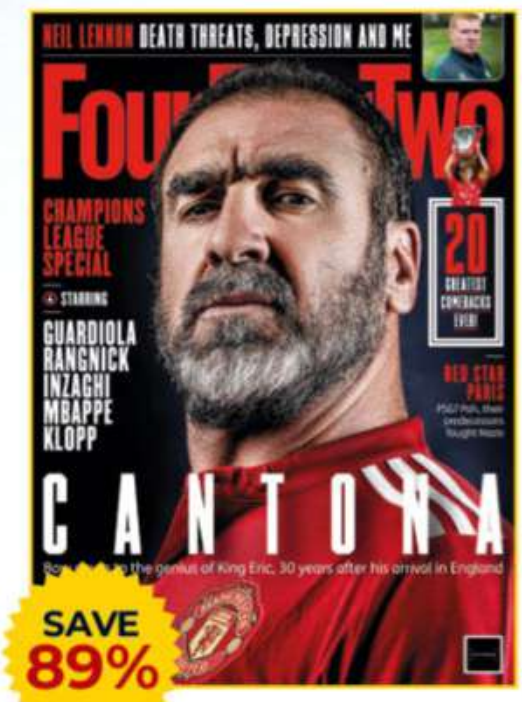

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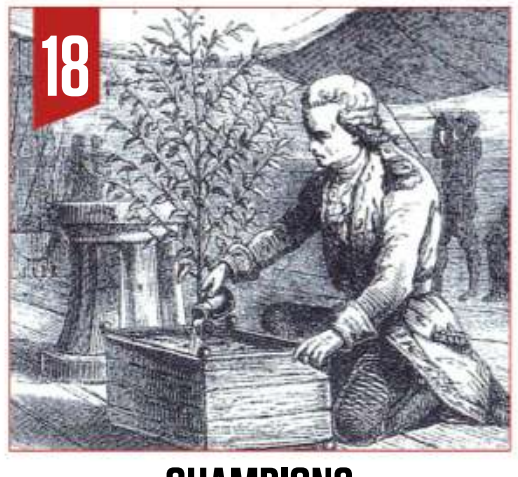
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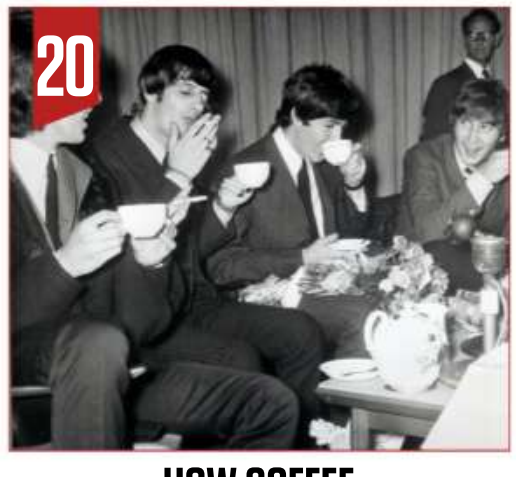
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HOW COFFEE SHAPED THE WORLD

Main image source: © Getty Images

Written by Mike Haskew, Scott Reeves, Josh West, David Williamson

Key Events

Lloyd's coffee house was particularly popular among sailors and shipowners for getting reliable shipping news

1688 LLOYD'S OF LONDON

Edward Lloyd opens a London coffeehouse, and his establishment is frequented by many wealthy merchants and insurance representatives. Their discussions prompt the beginnings of the modern worldwide insurance company that came to be known as Lloyd's of London.

ARAB TRADE 1000

An early form of coffee comes to the Middle East as Arab traders bring the substance from eastern Africa and begin boiling a drink called qahwa.

VIENNA'S FIRST COFFEEHOUSE 1683

Jerzy Franciszek Kulczycki opens the first coffeehouse in Vienna, using beans that have been abandoned by the retreating Turkish army after the siege of the city is lifted.

BRAZILIAN BREW BEGINS 1727

Colonel Francisco de Melo Palheta brings coffee from French Guiana to Brazil after the wife of the governor hides cuttings in a bouquet she presents to him.

COFFEE COMES TO KENYA 1893

Missionaries bring coffee trees from Reunion Island to Kenya, and these descendants of early coffee trees from Ethiopia usher in the era of Kenyan coffee production.

1688 1690 1806

TO VENICE AND THE POPE 1600

After Italian traders bring coffee to Venice from the Ottoman Empire, Pope Clement VIII dismisses concerns and blesses the beans, making them acceptable for Christian consumption.

PENN'S PERKY PURCHASE 1683

William Penn, founder of the Pennsylvania colony, buys a supply of coffee in New York. It's the first appearance of coffee in the records of an American colony.

BOSTON TEA AND BOSTON BREW 1773

Following the famed Boston Tea Party, the popularity of coffee soars among American colonists, who refuse to pay the tea tax to the British Crown.

1690 DUTCH SMUGGLING

Pieter van den Broecke, an agent of the Dutch East India Company, smuggles coffee beans out of the port of Mocha, Yemen, beginning the profitable Dutch coffee trade as the European nation exports coffee plants to its colonies in Indonesia and Ceylon.

1806 NAPOLEON, COFFEE AND CHICORY

Napoleon Bonaparte outlaws coffee imports, and the French people introduce chicory to extend their supply. Though the restrictions end, the practice of including chicory remains and becomes a cultural feature in French Louisiana, particularly in the city of New Orleans.

A Café Napoléon is an iced-coffee cocktail from New Orleans, mixing Mandarine Napoléon and coffee liqueur

1920 PROHIBITION PERKS UP COFFEE SALES

As Prohibition bans the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages in the United States, Americans turn increasingly to coffee and its rousing caffeine for a stimulating alternative beverage. Today the United States remains among the world's leading nations for coffee consumption.

HILLS BROS INNOVATION 1900

Independent roasting houses and coffee mills suffer a blow as Hills Bros introduces vacuum-packed tins of roasted coffee that are ready for use by households.

DECAFFEINATED MASS PRODUCTION 1906

George Constant Washington, a Belgian-born American inventor, makes his fortune when he perfects a method of mass production for decaffeinated coffee and opens the G Washington Coffee Company.

STARBUCKS SKYROCKETS 1971

The first Starbucks coffee enterprise is established, in Seattle, and half a century later its retail coffeehouses are located in 80 countries around the world. Starbucks is one of the most recognised – and controversial – brands on the coffee market today.

1901 — 1920 — 2004

SANKA SUPPORTS SLUMBER 1903

Ludwig Roselius – a German coffee importer, founder of the company Kaffee Hag and inventor – develops Sanka, a brand of instant decaffeinated coffee that becomes popular around the world.

NESTLE DEVELOPS FREEZE-DRIED COFFEE 1938

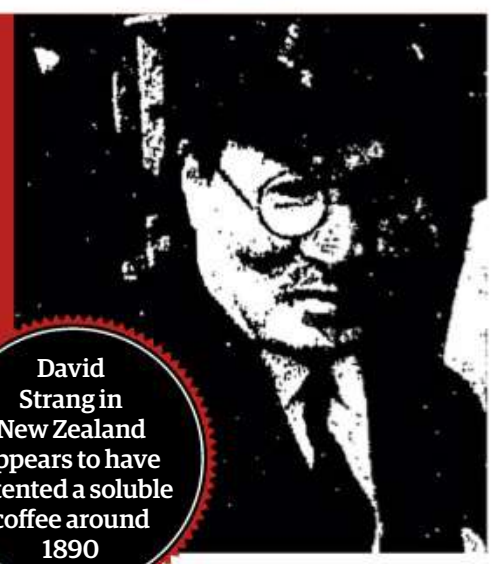
Researchers with the Nestle Company develop freeze-dried coffee as a method of storing the surplus harvest in Brazil, the world's leading coffee producer for the last 150 years. Nescafé follows.

GOVERNMENT-ISSUE COFFEE 1942

The inclusion of Maxwell House instant coffee in American soldiers' rations during World War II raises its popularity, while citizens at home endure rationing.

1901 COFFEE IN AN INSTANT

Satori Kato, an American chemist of Japanese descent, develops instant coffee soluble in water, revolutionising availability of the beverage. He gains a patent and exhibits the product at the Pan-American Exposition. Some researchers claim, however, that instant coffee was developed earlier in New Zealand.



David Strang in New Zealand appears to have patented a soluble coffee around 1890

2004 COFFEE REIGNS SUPREME

A lot of Esmeralda Special coffee sets a record online price at $21 per pound. Two years later a crop of the premium brand sells for $50.25 per pound and in 2009 the price hits $117.50, reflecting the worldwide enthusiasm for high-end luxury coffee.

All images: © Alamy

Inside History

OTTOMAN COFFEEHOUSE

Ottoman Empire
1555 – 1922

Constantinople's first coffeehouse was opened by two merchants from Damascus in 1555. The small shop in a poor district of town soon proved to be a huge hit and was widely imitated. Just 15 years later there were said to be over 600 different stalls, shops and cafes selling coffee in the cosmopolitan Ottoman capital.

The coffeehouse provided a place for the men of the Ottoman Empire – and it was men only, no women – to gather in a purely social setting. Coffeehouses helped to stimulate art and culture as knowledge was passed from person to person. As with the modern coffeehouse, a sense of community was established and coffeehouse owners got to know their regular customers – they would have their preferred drink prepared before they even asked for it.

They could also be a hotbed of political debate and a focus for agitation, a fact not lost on the rulers of the Ottoman Empire. In 1633 Sultan Murad IV banned coffeehouses entirely in Constantinople because he thought they were frequented by people plotting against him. More than 200 years later the same fear led Abdul Hamid II to send undercover agents to eavesdrop on coffeehouse conversations.

Yet the occasional royal crackdown on coffeehouses did little to dent their popularity. Strong Turkish coffee, often referred to as the 'black pearl', was by far the most popular social beverage of Ottoman men and women. By 1800 there were over 2,500 coffeehouses in Constantinople and countless others across the empire, all catering to distinct customer bases from rich elites to poor workers.

The Ottoman coffeehouse was considered to be of such importance that a grand coffeehouse was often one of the first buildings commissioned by the Ottomans in a newly conquered territory, a physical example of the civility of their rule.

CEZVE
Coffee was heated in a metal pot called a cezve, typically made of brass or copper, with a long handle and small spout to allow the hot drink to be poured into a small porcelain cup. The coffee was served unfiltered, leaving the grounds in the cup. Some would settle in the bottom, some ground beans would be consumed with the drink.

PEYKE
Coffeehouses were social spaces that encouraged Ottomans to interact outside the traditional meeting places of the home, work and mosque. Customers sat on long sofas called peykes that typically ran alongside three sides of a square-shaped room. They gathered to exchange gossip, discuss the news and even plan political resistance – a fact that led to coffeehouses occasionally being banned or restricted by the government.

SHOES
The soles of footwear were seen as dirty and unsanitary so, similar to private houses and mosques, customers were expected to remove their shoes when in the coffeehouse. Rather than taking them off at the door, they would usually leave them by their seat.

COFFEE OVEN
A mixture of water, sugar and very finely ground coffee beans was boiled over the fire of an oven by a skilled coffee brewer. It was removed from the heat as the drink began to froth but before it boiled over, and it might be reheated again to achieve the desired amount of froth. Customers would indicate how sweet they wanted their coffee when they ordered it.

WINDOWS

Women were not allowed inside coffeehouses. Men often congregated in the coffeehouse after evening prayers, allowing women to hold their own social gatherings in homes. Coffeehouse windows were left open, allowing people outside to look in. This contrasted with the home, where looking at women and children in their domestic space was seen as morally wrong and windows were often closed.

OUTSIDE SPACES

Many coffeehouses had outside spaces set aside, often a courtyard, where customers could sit and enjoy the long summer evenings. Small sofas and cane furniture provided a place to sit, and a well-placed willow tree might offer some shade. Courtyards also offered a space where poets, musicians, storytellers and actors could perform for customers.

PERFORMANCE SPACE

With seating around the outside of a room, coffeehouses had a layout that was ideal for performance. Customers might recite poetry or read from a book, while musicians and actors might ply their trade from a makeshift stage. Karagöz shadow plays were particularly popular. Since there was no specialist theatre in the Ottoman capital until the 19th century, the coffeehouse was the most popular place for entertainers to perform.

CHESS BOARD

Games such as cards and dice were rarely played in coffeehouses because they encouraged gambling. However, chess and backgammon were popular because they were games of strategy, tactics and skill and any wagers on the outcome were limited to paying for drinks. Other entertainments included reading: individual customers might find themselves engrossed in a book, or one customer might read aloud to a group.

FOUNTAIN

Different coffeehouses catered for different customers. In working-class neighbourhoods, customers sat on simple benches in rooms that lacked decoration and often opened out directly onto the street. The grandest coffeehouses featured spectacular interiors including high ceilings, huge windows, fountains, carved woodwork and Islamic scripture painted on the walls.

NARGHILE

Tobacco arrived in the Ottoman Empire around the same time that coffeehouses began to appear and it didn't take long for the two to combine. Coffeehouse customers used narghile waterpipes to smoke tobacco, although it was not universally popular. Tobacco smoking was banned by the government of Sultan Mehmed IV after a careless smoker was blamed for the Great Fire of 1660 that burned much of Constantinople.

Illustration by Adrian Mann

BEDOUIN COFFEE BREWER

Jordan c.1500 – present

HOSPITALITY

The serving of coffee was a symbol of hospitality and trust, and had traditional rituals. Guests would never have more than three cups and indicated they wanted a refill by handing their cup back to the host. If they'd had enough, they shook the cup before returning it.

DISHDASHA

Coffee was traditionally only brewed by men, who wore a long robe called a dishdasha. Although marriages were often arranged by female relatives, the fathers of the prospective bride and groom would agree the match over a coffee. The ritual of coffee drinking between men also helped to seal familial and tribal bonds.

ROASTING PAN

Green coffee beans were roasted over a fire at a temperature around 200°C. The first records of coffee beans being exported from Ethiopia to Yemen date to the 15th century and the knowledge of coffee brewing soon spread across the Arab world and to Europe.

DALLAH

Coffee was drunk during negotiations such as the settling of a dispute. A guest who had something to discuss placed his coffee in front of him rather than drinking it straightaway. A host who wanted to impress his guest might pour the coffee into a decorated pitcher called a dallah before he served it.

COFFEE POT

Ground coffee and ground cardamom were brought to the boil in a coffee pot. It was critical that the coffee was served hot – a guest commenting that their drink was cold was considered a huge insult. The host always served themselves first to check the temperature and to demonstrate there was nothing harmful in the drink.

MEHBASH

Roasted coffee beans were ground with a pestle in a dish known as a mehbash. The rhythmical sound of the pestle striking the mehbash indicated that the Bedouin coffee ritual was about to begin. The grounds were very fine as the coffee was served unfiltered.

FEENGHAL

Coffee was served in small cups without handles called feenghal. Only three cups were used. The host used the first, the second cup went to the oldest male guest who usually sat to the host's right, and the third was given to the next person around the circle. The rest were required to wait their turn.

Illustration by: Kevin McGivern

Historical Treasures

LA PAVONI IDEALE ESPRESSO MACHINE

The device that introduced the world's favourite hot drink
Milan, 1910

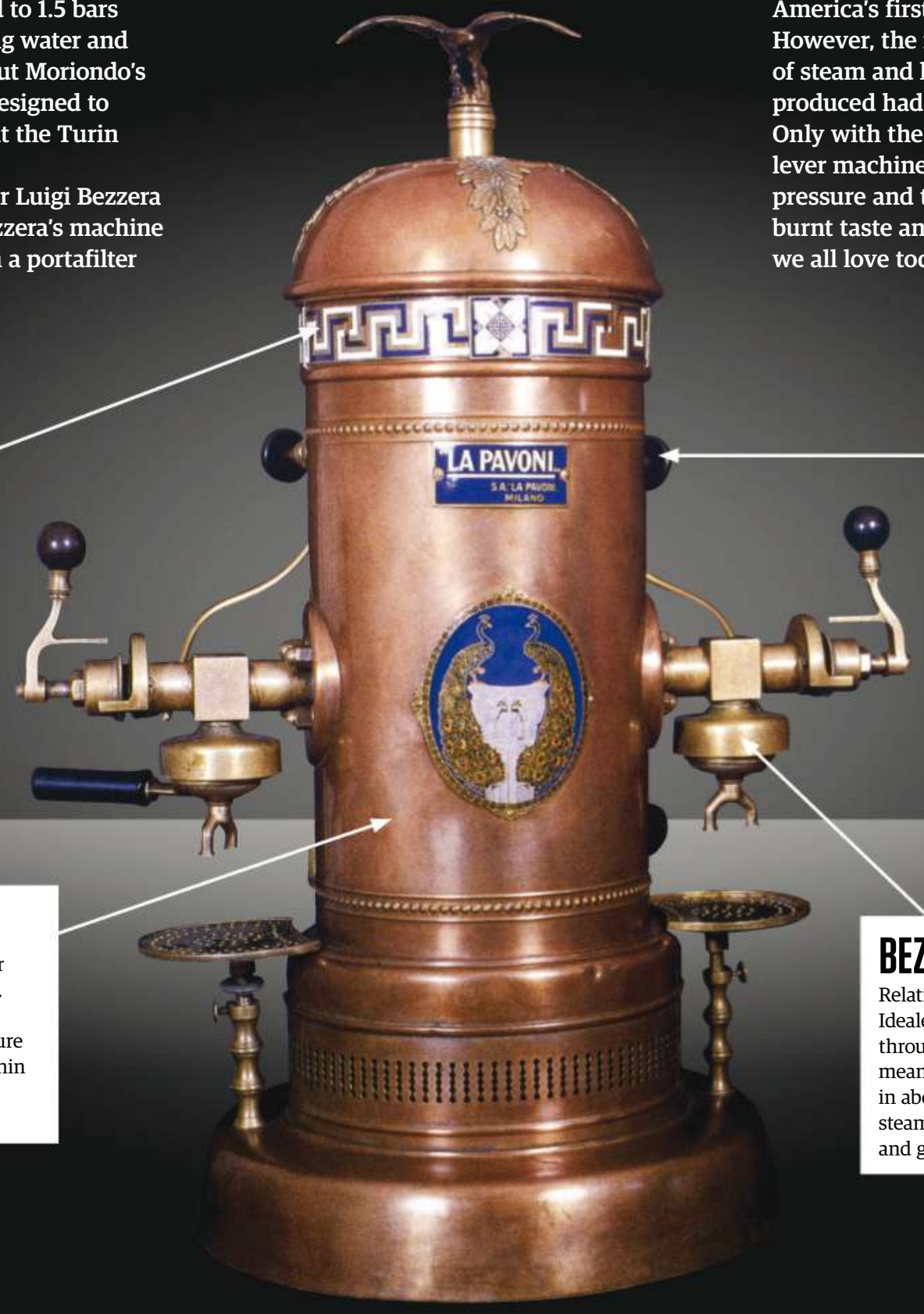
By the 19th century, coffee drinking was hugely popular in Europe and America, not to mention big business. But one problem for those rushing to work or looking to make a profit was how long coffee took to brew: between five and ten minutes! Entrepreneurial inventors set about solving this using the miracle power of the day... steam.

The first patent for what could be called an 'espresso' machine was awarded to industrialist Angelo Moriondo in 1884. Moriondo's machine consisted of a large boiler, heated to 1.5 bars of pressure, which pressed boiling water and steam through coffee grounds. But Moriondo's machine was only a prototype, designed to attract customers to his display at the Turin General Exposition.

In 1901, Milanese manufacturer Luigi Bezzera improved Moriondo's design. Bezzera's machine pushed steam and water through a portafilter of tamped coffee grounds, meaning fresh coffee could be brewed in a matter of seconds. But the machine's open flame made it difficult to control the all-important temperature and pressure, not to mention Bezzera had neither the money nor marketing experience to sell his device.

Bezzera was saved in 1903 when his patent was bought by Desiderio Pavoni, a fellow Milanese manufacturer. Together, Bezzera and Pavoni made additional improvements, including a pressure-release valve that saved baristas from being scalded by bursts of burning coffee whenever they used the portafilters. In 1905, the La Pavoni Company was created and at the 1906 Milan Fair the Ideale was unveiled. Visitors flocked to try what the pair called a 'cafée espresso', literally meaning 'coffee made on the spur of the moment'.

The Ideale became the coffee machine of choice thanks to its ability to make up to 1,000 cups an hour, and La Pavoni dominated the market for over a decade, including installing America's first espresso machine in 1927. However, the machine wasn't perfect – its use of steam and low pressure meant the coffee it produced had a distinctly bitter and burnt taste. Only with the invention of Achille Gaggia's lever machine after World War II was the water pressure and temperature adjusted to solve the burnt taste and create the modern espresso that we all love today.



ART DECO DESIGN

As La Pavoni machines appeared in fashionable cafes across Europe, Bezzera's original bare, utilitarian design was replaced. New chrome covers with elaborate Art Deco designs became the distinct look of Ideale machines, always embossed with La Pavoni's original peacock logo.

PRESSURE-RELEASE VALVE

Bezzera's original design meant baristas were splattered with boiling coffee whenever they used the lever to release pressure. Introduced by Pavoni, the pressure-release valve meant pressure could be maintained inside the boiler without the baristas risking third-degree burns.

VERTICAL BOILER

A large brass boiler heated water via a protected gas hob beneath. A gas flame allowed a constant temperature of 120°C and pressure of 1.5 bars to be maintained within the boiler. The still water would sometimes go stale, however.

BEZZERA'S PORTAFILTERS

Relatively unchanged since 1901, the Ideale's portafilters pushed steam through coffee grounds via a lever, meaning an espresso could be made in about a minute. But the searing steam would always scald the grounds and give the coffee a bitter taste.

© Alamy

Hall of Fame

CHAMPIONS OF COFFEE

Ten figures who've played vital roles in the centuries of intrigue, entrepreneurism and commerce that have made coffee so popular

KALDI
ETHIOPIA, 9TH CENTURY

A goatherd in the Ethiopian Kaffa Plateau, Kaldi is said to have discovered the coffee plant and the energising effects of its leaves and berries. Legend has it that Kaldi noticed his goats were jumping around and playing with particular energy after ingesting the leaves and berries of a small bush that grew wild in the area. He is believed to have chewed the berries and leaves as well then reported their properties to nearby monks, who carried the experimentation further.

BABA BUDAN
INDIA, 16TH CENTURY

Both Muslims and Hindus revere Baba Budan, a Sufi monk who is credited with bringing coffee beans from the port of Mocha, Yemen, to his native India following an Islamic hajj to the Arabian Peninsula in the 16th century. Budan was said to have brought seven beans to India because the number seven is sacred to Muslims. He hid them in his beard and planted them on the slopes of the Chandragiri Hills in Mysore State. They eventually proliferated, breaking the Middle Eastern hold on coffee production and trade. His tomb is located in those hills, which later were given his name.

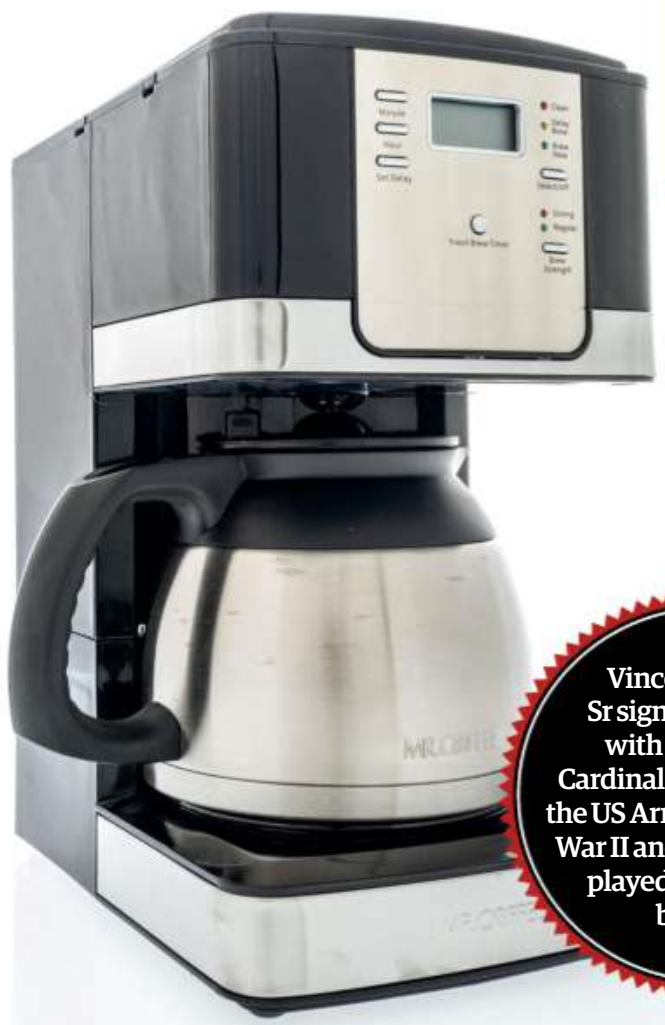
POPE CLEMENT VIII
ITALY (PAPAL STATES), 1536 – 1605

Pope Clement VIII was probably the first pope to drink coffee. When leaders of the Roman Catholic Church advised it should be banned as "Satan's drink", he decided to taste it for himself before making a decision. When he'd finished, Clement declared: "Why, this Satan's drink is so delicious it would be a pity to let the infidels have exclusive use of it." It's said he then blessed the coffee bean.

Suleiman I
Ottoman Turkey, 1494 – 1566

Suleiman I, also known as Suleiman the Magnificent, ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1520 until his death in 1566. He was its tenth and longest reigning sultan and governed an estimated 25 million people. He led conquering armies into Eastern Europe and was only halted at the Siege of Vienna in 1529. During Suleiman's rule, the drinking of coffee became an object of debate among Islamic leaders, and its consumption was forbidden due to its stimulating effects. However, while his armies carried the concoction to Europe, Suleiman recognised the popularity of coffee and rescinded these restrictions with an edict in 1524.

A keen poet, Suleiman I wrote: "The people think of wealth and power as the greatest fate / But in this world a spell of health is the best state..."



VINCENT MAROTTA SR
USA, 1924 – 2015

Along with his business partner Samuel Glazer, Vincent Marotta Sr introduced Mr Coffee in 1972, and the automatic drip coffee maker soon supplanted the percolator in homes worldwide. The percolator was slower, using the same water repeatedly to infuse the ground coffee beans, producing inconsistent and sometimes bitter results.

Mr Coffee, however, replicated the drip brewing process that was prevalent in restaurants and cafes but had not been available in the home. Using filtered water heated to 93°C, Mr Coffee brought better-tasting coffee to the consumer in a quick and simple fashion. Baseball great Joe DiMaggio became the familiar spokesman for the product in a series of TV commercials, and in 1987 Glazer and Marotta sold the Mr Coffee parent company for $82 million.

Vincent Marotta Sr signed a contract with the St Louis Cardinals but enlisted in the US Army during World War II and never actually played professional baseball

All images: © Alamy

Kulczycki left the besieged city of Vienna in disguise, returning with news of impending relief, persuading its leaders not to surrender to the Ottomans.

JERZY FRANCISZEK KULCZYCKI

POLAND, 1640-94

Kulczycki was a hero of the Siege of Vienna in 1683 during the Great Turkish War between the Ottoman Empire and the Holy Roman Empire and its allies. He is remembered for his courage as a spy during the siege and for establishing the first coffeehouse in Austria after the defeat of the Turks, utilising coffee beans the retreating enemy had left behind. The coffeehouse was supposedly named the House Under the Blue Bottle and located near the city's cathedral on the Schlossgasse. For years the coffeehouse owners of Vienna held an annual celebration in Kulczycki's honour. Today, however, his claim to coffee fame is being seriously questioned. Nevertheless, it makes for a good story.

Gabriel de Clieu

France, 1687 – 1774

Sharing his scarce water ration with the coffee seedlings on board, De Clieu, a French naval officer and government official, helped them survive the long, difficult voyage from the royal greenhouses of Paris to Martinique in the Caribbean in 1720. This success spurred the growth of the coffee industry in the Americas; however, some scholars assert that coffee plants were already producing their valuable fruit in French Saint-Domingue and Dutch Surinam by the time of De Clieu's arrival.

DANG LE NGUYEN VU

VIETNAM, 1971 – PRESENT

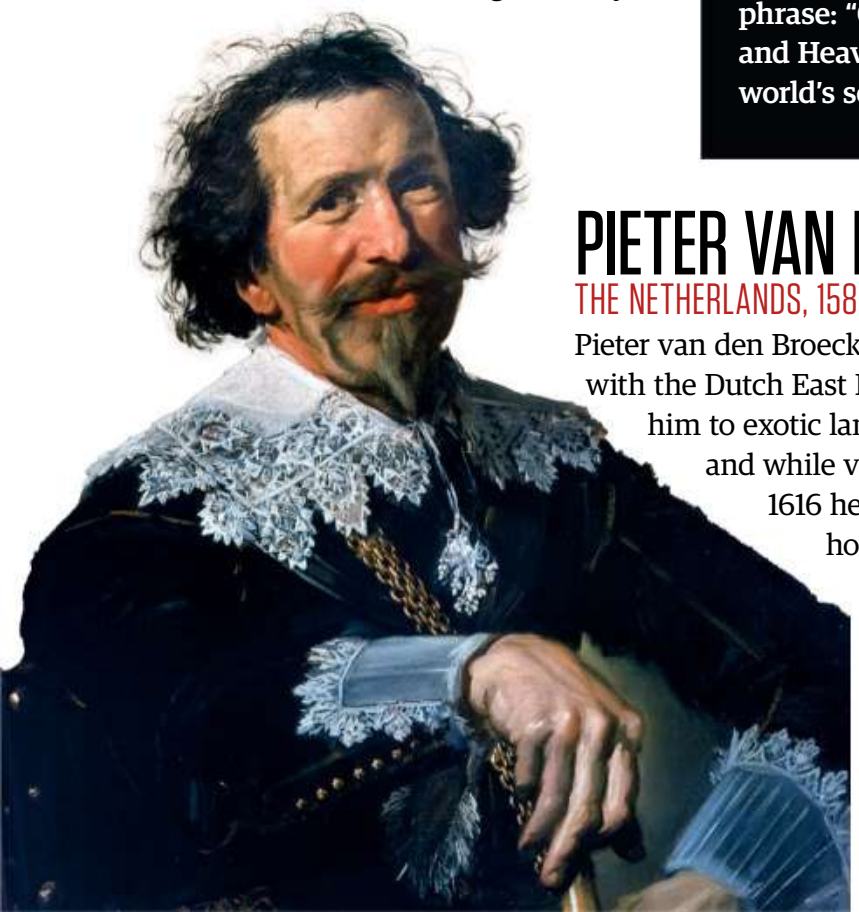
The 'Vietnam Coffee King', Dang Le Nguyen Vu and former spouse Le Hoang Diep Thao founded the Trung Nguyen Coffee Company in the city of Buon Ma Thuot in 1996, and two years later established the first of their coffeehouses in Ho Chi Minh City. He is a philanthropist and founder of the quasi-spiritual 'Doctrine of Coffee.' Among his pronouncements is the phrase: "Coffee is the treasure of Earth and Heaven." Today, Vietnam is the world's second-largest producer of coffee.

Howard D Schultz

USA, 1953 – present

In 1971, Starbucks was founded in Seattle, Washington, as a coffee bean store. In the early 1980s owners Jerry Baldwin, Zev Siegl and Gordon Bowker sold the enterprise to Howard D Schultz, who had once worked there. Schultz decided to take Starbucks in a different direction, opening coffee shops that served a variety of coffees and related drinks along with light foods. Schultz led a tremendous expansion across the Seattle area, then the West Coast, the rest of United States and dozens of other countries. Starbucks has since become the largest coffeehouse chain in the world. Schultz has served as corporate chairman twice, from 1986-2000 and from 2008-2017.

Logo: ©SOPA Images / Getty



PIETER VAN DEN BROECKE

THE NETHERLANDS, 1585 – 1640

Pieter van den Broecke was a cloth merchant who worked with the Dutch East India Company. His travels took him to exotic lands in Africa and the Middle East, and while visiting the port of Mocha, Yemen, in 1616 he is said to have quaffed "something hot and black, a coffee!" He smuggled coffee plants back to Amsterdam, and 40 years later healthy bushes were sent to Ceylon, leading to great wealth for The Netherlands.

Q&A

HOW COFFEE HAS SHAPED HISTORY

Coffee expert Mark Pendergrast discusses one of the world's most popular beverages

How did you become interested in the history of coffee?
I became interested in coffee because it covered the same sort of issues as my book on Coca-Cola and allowed me to look in particular at the relationship between the producing and consuming countries, issues of slavery, the environment and fair trade.

Do we have a clear idea of who coffee was originally discovered?
I'm fond of the story of Kaldi the Ethiopian goatherd who saw his goats frolicking and dancing around and noticed that they were eating the leaves and berries of an understory tree on the mountainsides. There are also stories of Sufi monks discovering it. It appears that the Ethiopian tribes had known that there was some magical substance in the beans and had ground them up and mixed them with animal fat for quick energy on journeys, back as far as 1000. The dried fruit was also used to make a drink called kisher. It wasn't until the late 1400s that someone realised you could roast the beans (seeds), grind them up and put them in hot water to infuse and make what we know as coffee. It became a staple for the monks to stay awake for midnight prayers and then became a social beverage with an elaborate ceremony that Ethiopians still practise, as I describe in my book.

Why do you think coffee is so popular around the world?
Coffee is a magical substance, is the short answer! In moderation it makes you alert and convivial, and it also has subtle tastes and flavours depending on the particular origin, cultivar and method of brewing. It's also an incredibly delicate product that can be ruined anywhere along the chain, from cultivation to the cup, so it must be really good for people to go to all that trouble!

Mark Pendergrast is an independent scholar and science writer. His first book – *For God, Country & Coca-Cola* – is the definitive history of the company and its impact. The second edition of *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World* is out now.

How important is coffee? What is its impact on business, lifestyle and the economy? How does coffee influence the lives of people who don't drink it?
Coffee is a multi-million dollar business. There is a myth that it is the second most-valuable traded commodity after oil, which isn't true, but it is certainly a huge business. There are at least 100 million people who make their living from coffee, from those who grow it on mountainsides to importers/exporters to roasters and retailers. It is a phenomenally complex economic chain, and in general those who do the hardest work of growing the coffee make the least amount of money. And yes, coffee certainly influences the lives of those who don't drink it since it influences culture, politics and economics. Coffee consumption itself has helped to create a lifestyle where there is a place to meet friends, business associates or strangers in a non-threatening and convivial environment.

COFFEE MERCHANTS.
THE CUSTOM OF EXTRACTING A DRINK FROM COFFEE BERRIES IS LOST IN ANTIQUITY — THE BEST COFFEE IN THE WORLD IS PRODUCED ON THE MOUNTAINS OF YEMEN, FROM BEING EXPORTED FROM MOCHA IT IS CALLED MOCHA COFFEE. THE ENGRAVING SHOWS A PARTY OF MERCHANTS ON THEIR WAY TO THE COAST WITH THE PRODUCE OF THEIR COFFEE PLANTATIONS.

ABOVE An engraving from around 1850 depicts coffee being offered to travelling merchants in Yemen

How has coffee or the desire for it shaped world history?
Let me count the ways! Coffee influenced the expansion of the Ottoman Empire in its attempt to keep a monopoly on its growth, the sobering of Europe and the growth of the Renaissance. It helped the Dutch become one of the strongest colonial powers. It helped soldiers fight in the US Civil War, both world wars, Vietnam and beyond. It led to the establishment of repressive regimes in Central America, to the slave rebellion in Haiti in 1791, to the development of branding and advertising, to controversies over health, and in so many more ways. Coffee invaded and transformed mountainsides in tropical areas, sometimes with devastating environmental results, but it has also provided an important habitat for migratory birds in shade-grown coffee plantations in Latin America and elsewhere. Coffee promoted the enslavement and persecution of indigenous peoples. It sobered European workers, while coffeehouses provided a social venue that spawned new art and business

Photo courtesy of: Mark Pendergrast

UNCOMMON GROUNDS: THE HISTORY OF COFFEE AND HOW IT TRANSFORMED OUR WORLD
IS OUT NOW
FROM BASIC BOOKS

2x © Getty Images

ABOVE The Beatles enjoy a cup of coffee at London Airport, 1964

enterprises, as well as revolutions. Along with other commodities, it gave birth to international trade and futures exchanges. In Latin America it created vast wealth next to dire poverty, leading to repressive military dictatorships, revolutions and bloodbaths. And it continues to transform the world today in various ways. Coffeehouses provided a place to plan revolutions (French and American) as well as a place outside army barracks for American GIs to plot the anti-Vietnam War movement.

How did coffee become spread across the world?

After arabica coffee spread from Ethiopia to Yemen, the Ottoman Turks spread it throughout their empire but tried to maintain a monopoly over its growth. An Indian pilgrim named Baba Budan smuggled some fertile seeds to India to begin growing coffee in the Mysore region. Then the Dutch managed to grow coffee seedlings in greenhouses in Amsterdam and began to grow coffee in its Indonesian colonies in the 1700s. Soon afterwards, a French military officer took a coffee plant on a fraught ocean voyage to Martinique in 1723, from which most of the coffee that eventually grew in Latin America descended. This included Central America, Colombia and most notably Brazil. Now coffee grows in a girdle around the world between the Tropics of Capricorn and Cancer, including Papua New Guinea, Kenya, Rwanda, Thailand, Hawaii and now even some places in California.

Is coffee as popular in other areas of the globe as it seems to be in the West today?

Coffee is incredibly popular in Japan and has now spread in a big way to Korea and even China. In its long battle to win the hearts of tea drinkers it seems to be advancing strongly.

What are your thoughts on the evolution of coffee? Do all caffeinated drinks owe something to coffee for their existence?

Decaffeinated coffee, invented early in the 20th century, wasn't terribly popular until health scares advanced sales substantially around 1980. Health scares over the use of chemicals led to alternate methods and today there are really excellent decaf offerings. Coffee-flavoured drinks and cold-brewed and iced coffee are increasingly popular. Coffee is only one of many caffeinated plants which also include, of course, tea, as well as guarana and in some ways chocolate. There are also energy drinks and soft drinks that contain caffeine. But yes, coffee is the source of the most caffeine consumed in the world.

What are some of the big recent events in coffee history that have changed the way we consume coffee at home and in coffee shops?

Mr Coffee helped to popularise the drip method of coffee, followed by many other, better brewers. The speciality coffee revolution began with the establishment of Peet's Coffee in Berkeley in 1966, which inspired the beginning of Starbucks, among many other small high-quality roasters that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. Starbucks was initially just one of them, before Howard Schultz took over and transformed it into the retail chain that we know today. Until then, Starbucks primarily promoted roasted beans, not ready-made espresso-based drinks. Freeze-dried coffee was one of the first efforts to improve the quality of instant coffee, but now we have Starbucks' Via and other high quality instant coffees. The one-way valve bag, allowing freshly roasted beans to degas without blowing up the container, was a major advance, as well as the AeroPress and nitrogen-frozen cold brews.

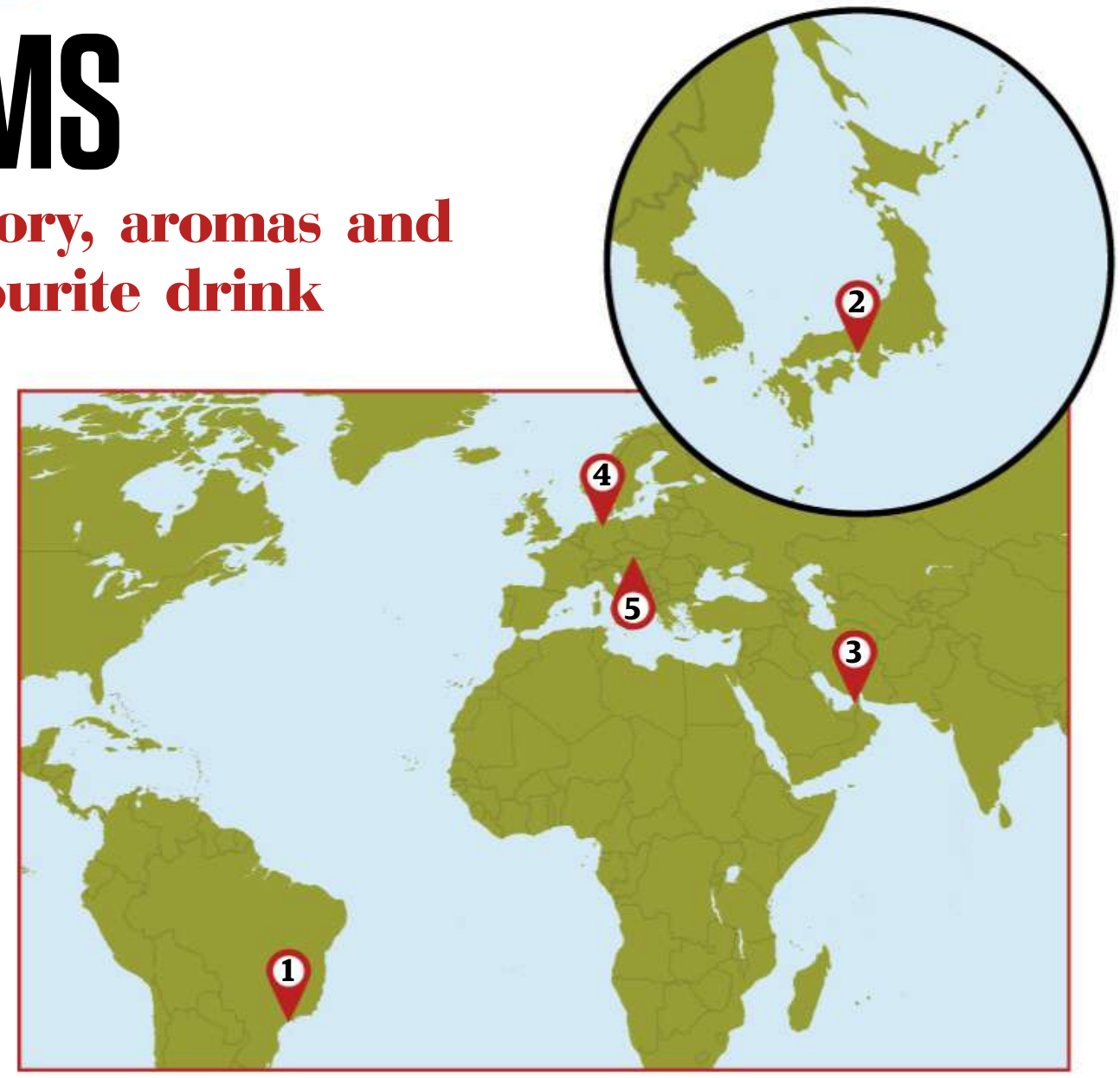
What is the future of coffee?

It's growing in popularity worldwide, although climate change threatens the industry because coffee has to be grown higher on mountainsides, and eventually its growth could be severely curtailed.

Places to Explore

COFFEE MUSEUMS

Experience a blend of history, aromas and flavours of the world's favourite drink



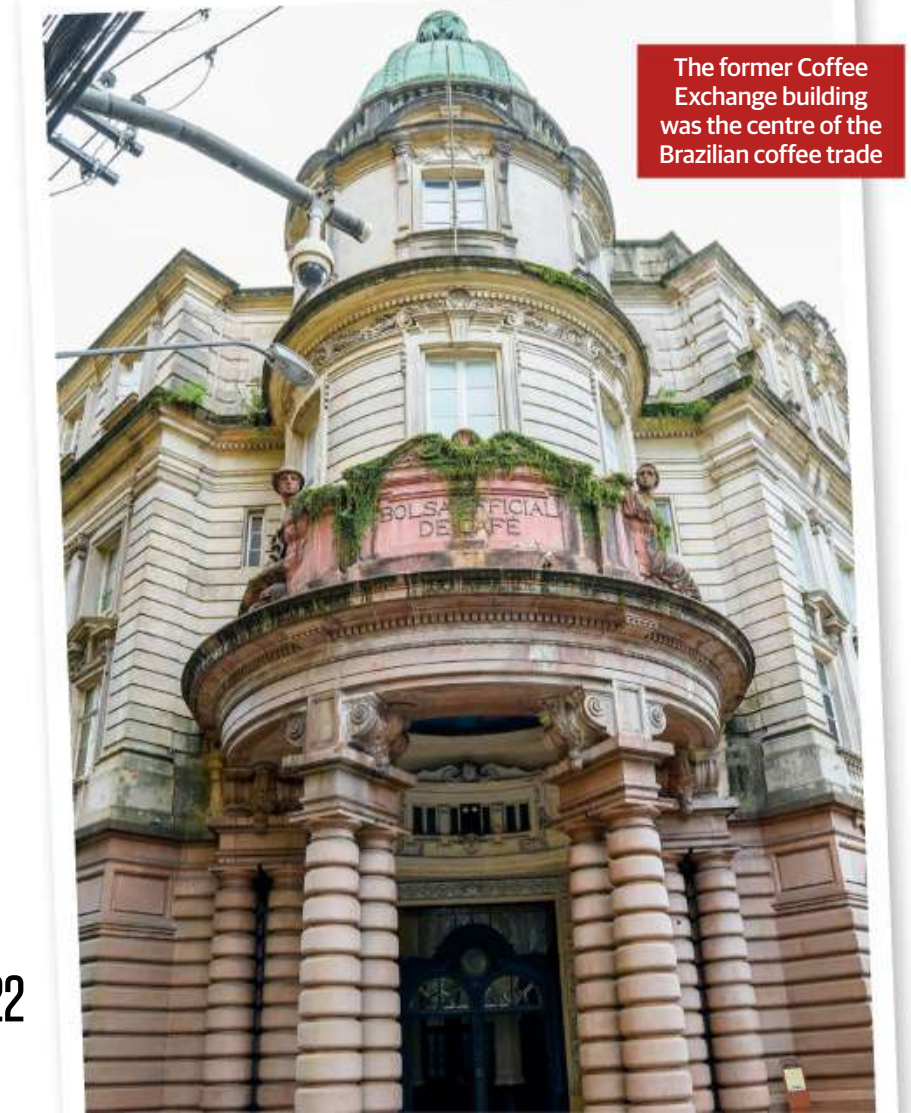
1 MUSEO DO CAFE
SANTOS, SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

Coffee was the number-one export of Brazil in the 19th century and this museum pays homage to that tradition and heritage. Housed in the former Coffee Exchange building, which was renovated in 1998, the museum boasts a mixture of grand architecture, art deco interiors decorated with fine art, and stunning stained glass windows. It's a spectacular backdrop in which to learn the history of coffee in Brazil, from cultivation to consumption.

In addition to the permanent exhibition – The Story of Coffee in Brazil – the museum is also a space for artists to exhibit their work on a temporary basis throughout the year. And for visitors who want to take a deep dive into the world of coffee, the museum has an Information and Document Centre that houses no fewer than 500 books on coffee and its history.

The coffee shop is, of course, a welcome stop at the end of a tour of the museum and here visitors can soak up the aromas as well as taste and buy a range of coffees, many of which are quite rare.

Open Thursday to Sunday inclusive, 11am to 5pm
Admission is R$10 for adults and R$5 for students, teachers in the public system and the over 60s
(Free for children up to five years old)



The former Coffee Exchange building was the centre of the Brazilian coffee trade

2 UCC COFFEE MUSEUM
KOBE, JAPAN

Image source: wiki/ 663highland

Established in 1987, the museum says its mission is to "pass on the magic of coffee to as many people as possible"

In recognition of the origins of coffee in the Islamic world, the museum's architecture tastefully reflects that of an Islamic mosque, but with a modern twist. The museum's vision is to educate and entertain visitors about the fascinating world of coffee, and boasts an interior that is cleverly designed to gently slope in a spiral to take you from one exhibition room to another. Visitors will learn about the history and processes of coffee production, and in addition to this there are exhibitions that celebrate coffee as part of our everyday lives – in advertising, music, literature and even stamps – showing how coffee has become part of a global culture. The museum also includes exhibits on some important issues such as Coffee and the Environment, and Coffee and Health. The Tasting Corner has a different themed tasting every month, enabling visitors to the museum to experience and sample a large variety of tastes and aromas from around the world.

Open Tuesday to Friday inclusive, 10am to 5pm. Admission is Y300 for adults, Y150 for over 65s and the disabled. (Entry is free for children.)

The Ethiopian coffee ceremony is one of many interactive experiences visitors can enjoy

3 THE COFFEE MUSEUM
DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

It is believed that coffee originated many hundreds of years ago in the mountains of Ethiopia, on into Arabia, and then through trade spread widely around the world. Located in the Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood, this museum is a celebration of the many and varied coffees of the Middle East and beyond.

The museum is home to a number of live demonstrations that give fascinating insights into the roasting and brewing styles for coffee from Arabia, Egypt and Ethiopia, so visitors can experience for themselves the tastes and aromas of these various blends and roastings.

Hospitality is a vital part of Islamic tradition and the museum has its very own Majlis exhibit, a comfortable seating area where guests would sit and drink coffee with their host as part of their evening's entertainment and enjoyment. To complete the visitor experience there are numerous film documentaries and a broad range of literature from which to learn even more about the history of coffee, as well as a café and museum shop.

Open Saturday to Thursday inclusive, 9am to 5pm. Admission is free.

4 KAFFEEMUSEUM BURG
HAMBURG, GERMANY

Located in a vaulted cellar of the Speicherstadt district, the museum lies in the very area of warehouses that were first used to store and process coffee in 1896. Here the whole history of coffee is revealed, from the toil of cultivating and harvesting the beans, through to the roasting and grinding ready for trading and selling. Bringing the story to life is the replica shop of the Burg family from 1923, complete with original coffee cans and machinery, and over 100 years of coffee advertising. Its exhibits, films and literature guide visitors back through time so they can immerse themselves in a bygone age.

Visitors to the museum can taste a variety of different coffees and blends on offer

There is a variety of events available to book, such as tastings and preparation seminars, and the museum shop is full of gifts and literature for the coffee enthusiast. The café is the ideal spot for homemade cakes and pastries, accompanied by the smells and flavours of a variety of coffees to be enjoyed on the spot or to take home.

Open Thursday to Sunday inclusive, 10am to 6pm, Admission 5 euros

The museum features historic coffee machinery and accessories

5 KAFFEEMUSEUM WIEN
VIENNA, AUSTRIA

The museum opened in 2003 and is dedicated to the tradition and heritage of Viennese coffeehouse culture, which was awarded UNESCO Cultural Heritage status in 2011. In keeping with this tradition, the museum offers visitors the chance to chat, relax and drink coffee.

Its collection houses a large range of coffee-making machines and coffee accessories from across the decades, all brought to life through original literature, advertising, packaging and photographs. Visitors are guided through the museum in groups and are given the complete 'Coffee Experience' in which the history of coffee is explored alongside the significance of coffeehouse culture both in Vienna and around the world. You can sample some different varieties – including vegan and lactose-free options – all prepared with authentic equipment.

The museum also offers a range of seminars and courses that can be booked so visitors can learn more about coffee and the very best preparation and serving techniques of the world's favourite drink.

Open Monday to Friday inclusive, 8am to 2pm. Admission is 15 euros

Learn all about Vienna's iconic coffeehouse culture

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STALIN'S PURGES

How the ruthless Soviet dictator secured his merciless grip on power

Written by Dr Peter Whitewood

On 1 December 1934, former member of the Soviet Communist Party Leonid Nikolaev entered the party's headquarters, the Smolny Building, in the city of Leningrad. After making his way to the third floor, he gunned down Leningrad party boss Sergei Kirov outside his office. Kirov was killed instantly, murdered in the middle of the afternoon. Nikolaev was immediately arrested, and confusion quickly abounded in the Soviet press as the Soviet political police, the NKVD, launched a search for other suspected accomplices.

Before the shooting, Nikolaev had become increasingly resentful of the party and blamed it for his unemployment and worsening personal circumstances. He had grown steadily convinced, moreover, that his wife was having an affair with Kirov. Nikolaev's motives aside, the impact of the shooting in the following months and years proved sensational and was the chief starting point of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's Great Terror. Before this dramatic day, Nikolaev was by no means a significant person in Leningrad. But his actions on 1 December had far-reaching consequences for hundreds of thousands of Soviet people living under the Stalin regime in the late 1930s.

Years later during the Cold War, historians typically blamed Stalin for arranging Kirov's murder and presented it as one of the crimes of the century. Stalin, it was said, had masterminded the killing with Nikolaev as his tool. Stalin had then used the murder to smear his former political opponents and anyone who stood in his way of achieving untrammelled power. If Stalin wanted someone arrested, they could be accused of participation in the conspiracy to kill Kirov, and evidence fabricated in support. On the day of Kirov's murder, Stalin rushed through a new emergency order – the law of 1 December 1934 – that formed the legal basis for much of the later Great Terror. The law sanctioned convictions and executions without a proper trial; those arrested had no

Illustration by: Kevin McGivern

“THE BACKDROP TO THE EXPLOSION OF STATE VIOLENCE FROM SUMMER 1937 WAS UNMISTAKABLY A DEEPENING ANXIETY ABOUT FORTHCOMING WAR”

access to proper representation. During the Cold War, historians also tended to present Kirov as a moderate and popular figure in the Communist Party, and perhaps even a rival for the leadership. It's not hard to see why Stalin became the chief suspect.

But since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 and historians gained much wider access to millions of formerly secret Russian archives, no evidence for Stalin having a hand in the murder has ever been found. And going against accepted wisdom, rather than a moderate in the party, Kirov is now understood as more of a hardliner, someone close to Stalin, a person untroubled with the dictator's repressive policies. In short, it is now clear there was no compelling reason for Stalin to have Kirov killed and Nikolaev most likely acted alone. But the absence of evidence for Stalin's culpability has not changed how we view the impact of the murder or its position as the starting point of the Great Terror. Even though he did not personally order it, the ruthless Soviet leader knew a good opportunity when he saw one and he quickly made use of Kirov's death to crack down on his former political opponents.

With Nikolaev arrested by the NKVD in December 1934, Stalin then pointed his finger at former supporters of the political opposition living in Leningrad as also culpable. Back in the 1920s Leningrad had been the stronghold of the former political oppositionist Grigory Zinoviev, a central player in the power struggles that erupted after party leader Vladimir Lenin's death in 1924, and one-time associate of Stalin's nemesis Leon Trotsky. Once Stalin had given the signal, Zinoviev's supporters in Leningrad were among the first to be swept up by the NKVD in an expanding circle of arrests going into 1935. But did Stalin truly believe that former oppositionists had anything to do with the murder or was he using Kirov's death as a pretext to get rid of his past political opponents? It is impossible for historians to know the answer for certain.

Leading the state's investigation into the Kirov murder from 1934 was Nikolai Yezhov, someone who as head of the NKVD from 1936-38 would become a driving force in the explosion of state violence. At this point in late 1934, however, Yezhov was not yet in control of the powerful NKVD apparatus. Yet he was someone Stalin trusted and, for this reason, he acted as his eyes and ears on the ground and Stalin allowed him to muscle in on the Leningrad investigation. Yezhov, importantly, was also a dyed-in-the-wool conspiracy theorist. Among the many fantastic conspiracies he endorsed, he was convinced that the remnants of the former political opposition were secretly plotting against the state and planning the assassinations of Soviet leaders. Kirov's death, although at the hands of Nikolaev, fitted perfectly into this conspiratorial worldview. With Yezhov effectively at the helm of the investigation, 1935 witnessed a rising number of former oppositionists arrested for so-called ‘political crimes’, charged with membership of supposed ‘counter-revolutionary’ groups or being engaged in sabotage or espionage against the state. By February 1935, Yezhov wrote to Stalin reporting that he had rounded up 1,000 oppositionists in Leningrad alone.

At the same time Yezhov worked to widen the scope of the conspiracy. He claimed in 1935 to have uncovered a direct link between the Kirov murder and Zinoviev and his fellow ‘Old Bolshevik’

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ABOVE Leningrad Communist Party boss Sergei Kirov, whose murder set the purge in motion

VICTIMS OF THE PURGE

Five prominent figures who suffered under Stalin's Great Terror

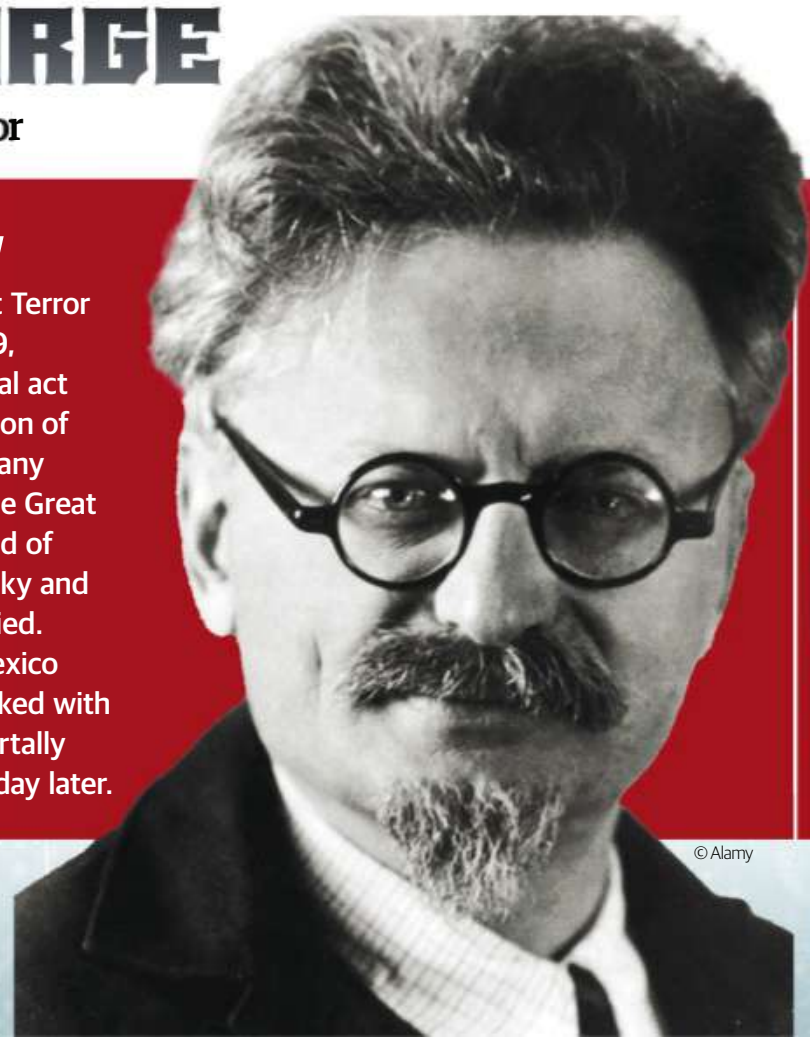
© Getty Images

Georgy Pyatakov

A key Bolshevik economist, Pyatakov held numerous top positions in the early years of the Soviet Union. A prominent Trotskyite, he was expelled from the party and was readmitted only after renouncing his views. Between 1933 and 1934 he was deputy head of the Soviet Union's heavy industry. He was arrested in 1936 and was a prominent figure in the second show trial. He was executed in January 1937.

Leon Trotsky

Although the Great Terror ended in early 1939, perhaps Stalin's final act was the assassination of Trotsky in 1940. Many of the victims of the Great Terror were accused of having joined Trotsky and he was openly vilified. He was living in Mexico when he was attacked with an ice-pick and mortally wounded, dying a day later.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and former oppositionist Lev Kamenev. Both men had blackened reputations going as far back as the Russian Revolution of 1917, when the two went against Lenin in resisting the October seizure of power. Yezhov now claimed the two were the masterminds behind Kirov's murder, yet at this point Stalin did not accept the accusation, probably because there was no real evidence whatsoever and the case needed to be stronger. Zinoviev and Kamenev were still charged but with the crime of 'moral complicity'. According to the NKVD, the two men's previous opposition in the party had helped create the atmosphere that inspired Nikolaev to murder Kirov. Zinoviev and Kamenev were sentenced to ten and five years respectively in the gulag (the Soviet penal system of labour camps).

Staging the trials

It would be another year-and-a-half, amid continuing arrests in the Communist Party, until prominent oppositionists such as Zinoviev and Kamenev would be directly blamed for Kirov's death, put on trial and executed. The culminating point was the dramatic August 1936 show trial, staged in Moscow, the first of three held during the Great Terror. The trial represented another escalation of the violence sweeping throughout the Communist Party, with thousands of party members now arrested. Brought back from the gulag Zinoviev and Kamenev, alongside 14 other defendants - all former supporters of the 1920s political opposition to Stalin - were forced to confess to a string of fantastic crimes in a carefully stage-managed event. Included was their supposed direction of ▶

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ABOVE Joseph Stalin and Nikolai Yezhov (right) near Moscow at the height of the Great Terror in 1937

RIGHT Political prisoners were brutalised in many of the forced labour camps

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Anastasia Bitsenko

A qualified teacher, Bitsenko became a socialist revolutionary and gained notoriety in 1905 when she marched into the office of the former minister of war Viktor Sakharov, placed a draft copy of his death sentence on his desk and shot him dead. Despite being a highly respected revolutionary, she fell victim to the purges and was shot on 16 June 1938.

© Getty Images

Isaac Babel

Best known as the author of the 1920s short story collection *Red Cavalry*, Isaac Babel was one of the many intellectual victims of the purge. Arrested in 1939, he was accused of espionage and executed by firing squad almost a year later. Today Babel remains a highly respected literary figure, with *Red Cavalry* having been reprinted under the prestigious Penguin Classics banner.

© Getty Images

Genrikh Yagoda

One of two NKVD heads who themselves became victims of the purge. Despite having prepared the first public trial, Genrikh Yagoda found himself being a defendant in the third and final one. Arrested in 1937 having been removed from office in 1936, Yagoda was convicted of being involved in a 'Trotskyite conspiracy' and executed in 1938.

Joseph Stalin and his former ally turned opponent, the party intellectual Nikolai Bukharin, 1930

Kirov's murder and organisation of further assassination attempts against other Soviet leaders, including Stalin himself. It goes without saying that these charges had no foundation. NKVD interrogators tortured the men on trial and threatened their families in order to extract confessions. Yet as far as the Soviet leadership – and Stalin – was concerned, a confession was still a confession. The first trial in August 1936 was also widely publicised and used to persuade ordinary Soviet citizens that the former political opposition were dangerous domestic terrorists – the public needed to be vigilant and any suspicious activities should be reported to the authorities. Because Stalin wanted the supposed danger broadcast to the world, foreign observers, journalists and diplomats were present at the trial (many knew it was a farce, but some were taken in). With the chief prosecutor, Andrei Vyshinsky, leading the trial and hectoring the group of men as "Trotskyist-Zinovievite monsters," all were convicted and immediately executed. Throughout the course of the show trial Stalin had, in essence, publicly manufactured a conspiracy theory. The executed men were said to have been members of a so-called 'Zinoviev-Kamenev Counter-revolutionary Bloc', depicted as a clandestine terrorist organisation. Summer 1936 marked the point when senior party members began to be executed for seemingly imaginary crimes.

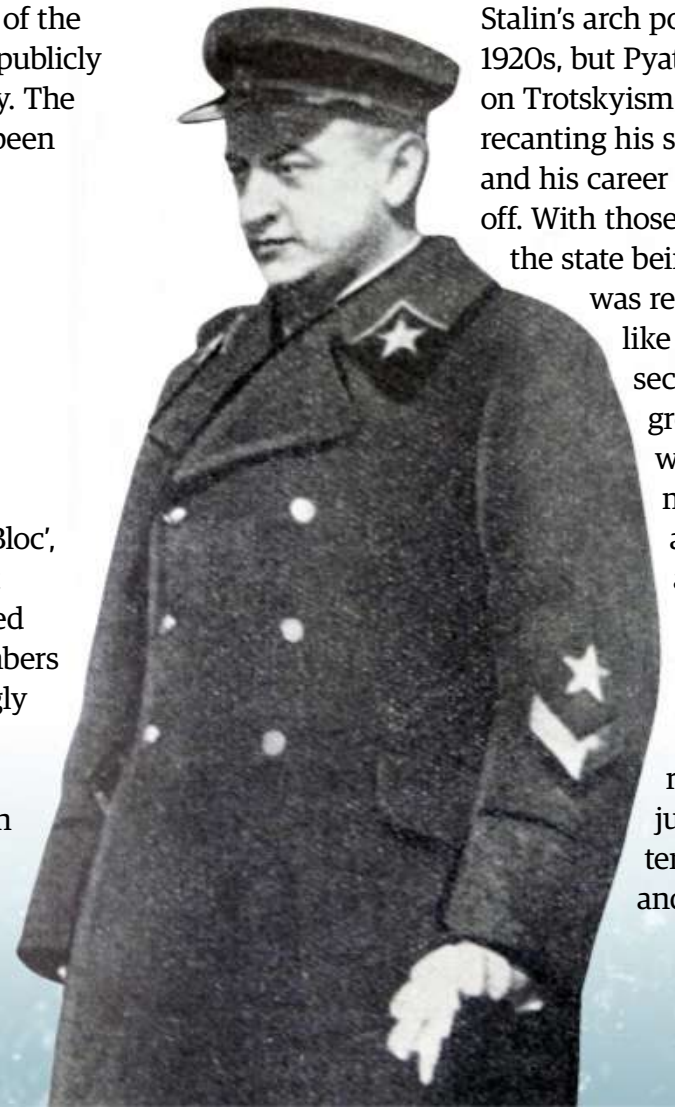
"STALIN WAS TRYING TO REMOVE ANY 'UNRELIABLE' PERSON FROM SOCIETY, AS FAR AS HE SAW IT"

Yezhov, who, as we have seen, had already taken a leading role in the Kirov murder investigation, played another central role in the first show trial. He helped Stalin script the trial and ensured the defendants delivered the right confessions in public. Yezhov was becoming an even stronger influence in the Communist Party and, one month later in September 1936, he formally took over the NKVD. In that same month Stalin had castigated – and demoted – the head of the NKVD, Genrikh Yagoda, for being 'four years behind' in the discovery of the Zinoviev-Kamenev Counter-revolutionary Bloc. Obviously, it had not looked good for Yagoda that under his watch Kirov had been killed and an oppositionist 'conspiracy' discovered by his rival (even though this was entirely imaginary). But with Yezhov at the helm of the NKVD, a committed conspiracy theorist had been given one of the most powerful positions in the state. This is not to say that we should blame the entire Great Terror on Yezhov. Stalin remained the highest authority and Yezhov had to answer to him. Yezhov had no choice but to work within the parameters set from above, but this does not mean he could not influence Stalin either.

A second show trial followed in January 1937 and the conspiracy was now rising up the party ranks. Forced into another crudely stage-managed Moscow spectacle, a second group of defendants included senior party figures such as Georgy Pyatakov, the deputy people's commissar for heavy industry. This was a key difference to the show trial of 1936: Zinoviev and Kamenev were disgraced former oppositionists, outsiders already expelled from the party, but Pyatakov was not. For sure, he had supported Stalin's arch political rival Trotsky in the 1920s, but Pyatakov had turned his back on Trotskyism at the end of the 1920s, recanting his supposed 'political errors', and his career had subsequently taken off. With those in senior positions across the state being arrested, the conspiracy was reaching new heights. And like before, the charges at the second trial remained entirely groundless and confessions were beaten from the arrested men. The group were accused of membership of an 'Anti-Soviet Trotskyist Centre', secretly connected to the Zinoviev-Kamenev Counter-revolutionary Bloc.

These supposed counter-revolutionaries were not just presented as domestic terrorists, either. Pyatakov and the other defendants were

BELOW
Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky, deputy of the Red Army and its most capable commander



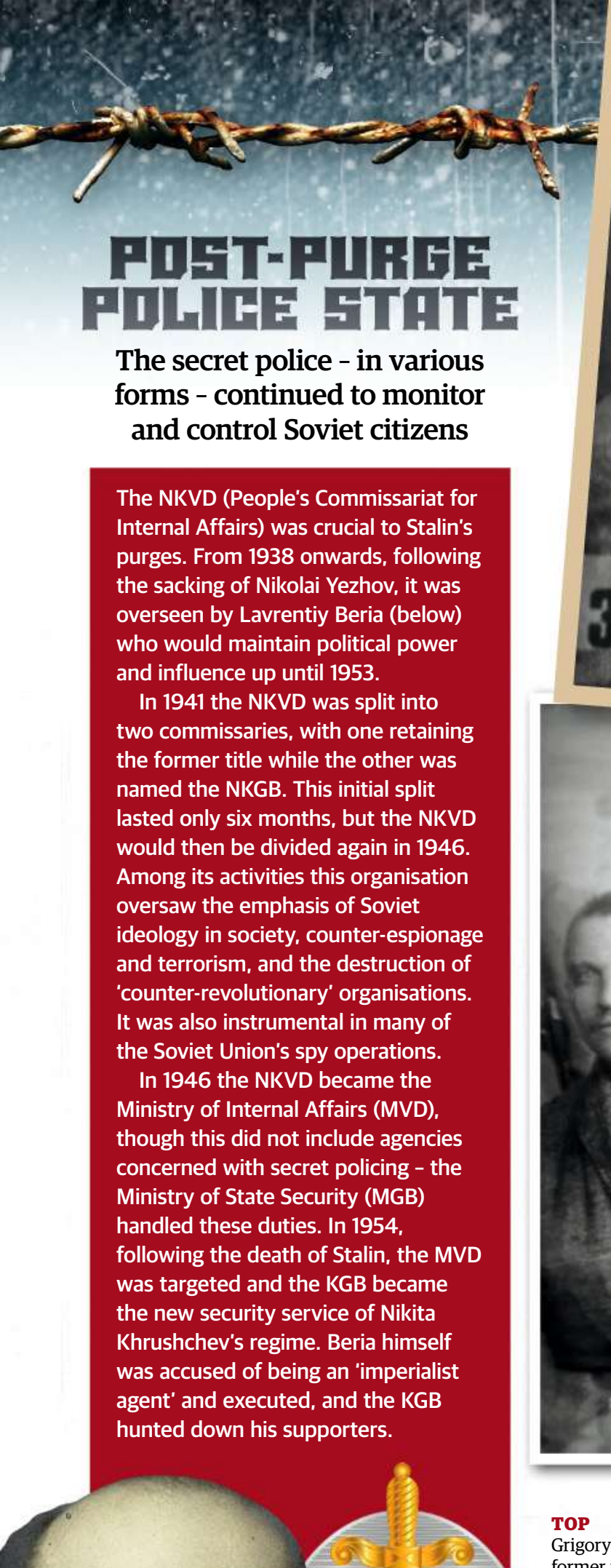
POST-PURGE POLICE STATE

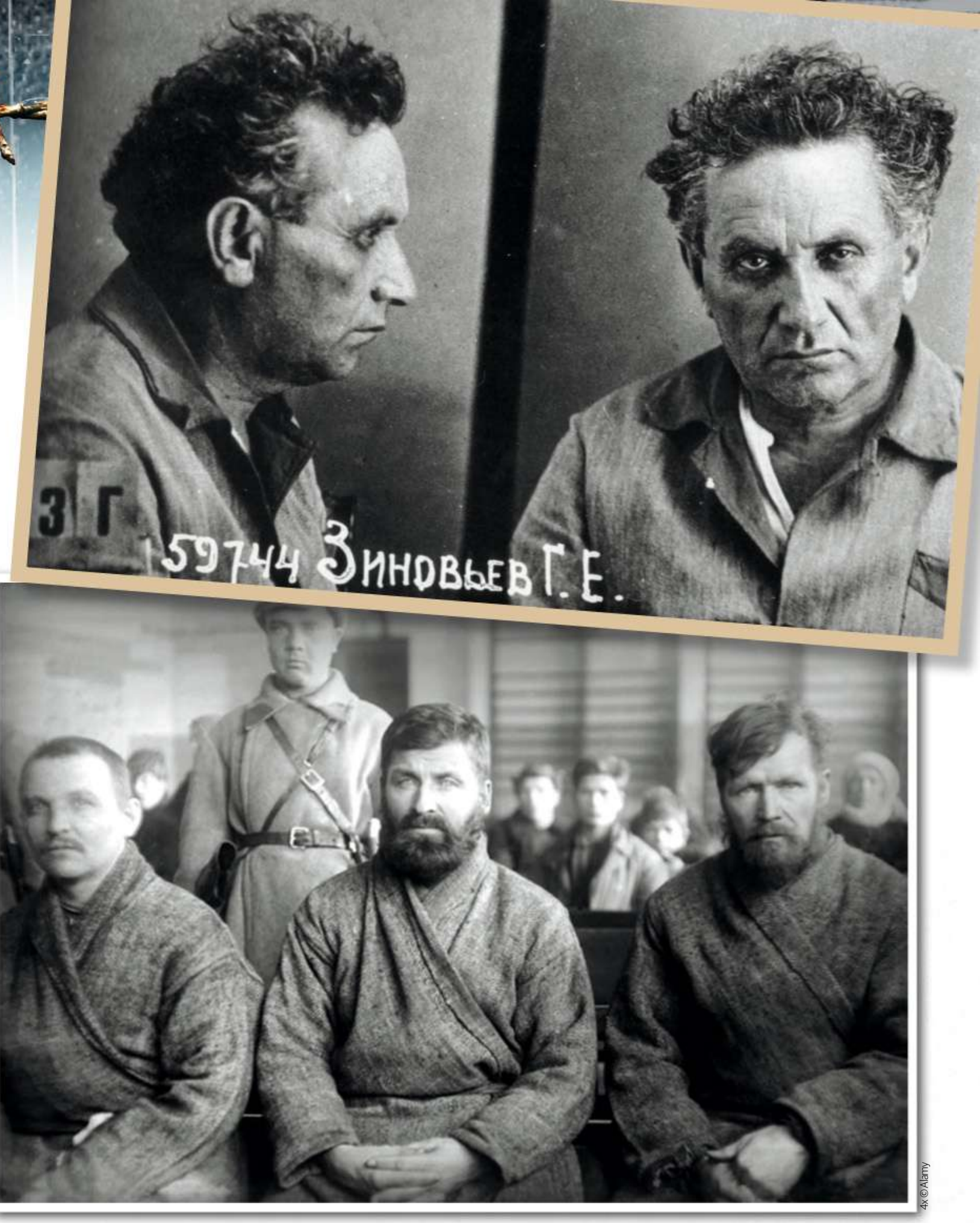
The secret police – in various forms – continued to monitor and control Soviet citizens

The NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) was crucial to Stalin's purges. From 1938 onwards, following the sacking of Nikolai Yezhov, it was overseen by Lavrentiy Beria (below) who would maintain political power and influence up until 1953.

In 1941 the NKVD was split into two commissaries, with one retaining the former title while the other was named the NKGB. This initial split lasted only six months, but the NKVD would then be divided again in 1946. Among its activities this organisation oversaw the emphasis of Soviet ideology in society, counter-espionage and terrorism, and the destruction of 'counter-revolutionary' organisations. It was also instrumental in many of the Soviet Union's spy operations.

In 1946 the NKVD became the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), though this did not include agencies concerned with secret policing – the Ministry of State Security (MGB) handled these duties. In 1954, following the death of Stalin, the MVD was targeted and the KGB became the new security service of Nikita Khrushchev's regime. Beria himself was accused of being an 'imperialist agent' and executed, and the KGB hunted down his supporters.





TOP
Grigory Zinoviev, former political oppositionist and victim of the 1936 show trial

ABOVE
The Moscow Trials took place between 1936 and 1938 and saw a number of older Bolsheviks and political enemies of Stalin convicted

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accused of working on the orders of Nazi Germany and Japan of not only planning terrorist attacks but also acts of sabotage to weaken the Soviet Union in advance of war. The second show trial pushed the message that 'foreign agents' and spies hidden in the Soviet Union were a serious and growing threat. The imagined conspiracy underpinning the growing political violence had clearly taken on a stronger international dimension, suggesting that Stalin was becoming more conscious of the worsening international climate in the years before the outbreak of WWII. The backdrop to the explosion of state violence from summer 1937 was unmistakably a deepening anxiety about a forthcoming war, something felt at all levels of the party and that they were acutely aware they could not control.

The Great Terror explodes

Before the final show trial, held one year later in 1938, the Great Terror escalated once again when a group of the Red Army's most senior commanders was arrested in May 1937. This group included Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky, deputy head of the Red Army and Hero of the Soviet Union. This round of arrests and later executions sparked international scandal – Stalin was destroying some of his most competent officers when it was clear that world war was approaching. Like the first two show trials, the officers were accused of coordinating a 'Military-Fascist Plot' which, according to the NKVD's 'evidence', sought to perpetuate acts of sabotage on German and Japanese orders, preparing the ground for an invasion of the Soviet Union. Once again, NKVD

interrogators provided the necessary evidence with torture (Tukhachevsky's blood-spattered confession has been discovered in the Russian archives).
A military trial was held in June 1937, but this time kept out of the public eye. It had major impact, nonetheless. Shortly after Stalin sanctioned a wide-ranging purge of the Red Army that would see nearly 30,000 officers discharged over the next year-and-a-half, and nearly 10,000 arrested. Tukhachevsky, the supposed ringleader of the military plot, was one of the most renowned figures in the Soviet Union. To many Soviet citizens he was a hero, now executed as a traitor. The constant churn and arrests of high-profile party members proved nothing short of disorientating. But ordinary Soviet people would suffer far worse than this.

The military purge was not yet the height of the Great Terror. One month later the violence truly exploded. In August 1937, Stalin ordered the first of a series of so-called mass operations that, for the first time, inflicted the violence on the ordinary Soviet population rather than party members and the elite. This was a radical acceleration in the scale of the Great Terror, targeting ordinary people in their hundreds of thousands.

What did the mass operations look like and why did they cause such death and destruction? The best way to understand the mass operations is to see them as large-scale sweep operations targeting entire population cohorts rather than individuals suspected of a crime. The first, launched in August – so-called operation 00447 – targeted rich peasants (reviled as 'kulaks' in Soviet propaganda) and a range of other supposed 'anti-Soviet elements'. NKVD and party officials on the ground were given arrest quotas for their regions and nearly all those arrested were entirely innocent. For historians today, it seems that Stalin was trying to remove any 'unreliable' person from society, as far as he saw it. Many of the mass operations during 1937 and 1938 were targeted solely at national minorities living in Soviet territory, including Germans, Poles and Koreans. This was nothing short of ethnic cleansing. By the time the mass operations were wound down in November 1938 their results were horrific: over one million people had been arrested and nearly 700,000 executed – in nearly every case without proper trial.

At the same time as this mass terror against ordinary people was unfolding, a final show trial was staged in March 1938, marking the end point of the

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Solovetsky

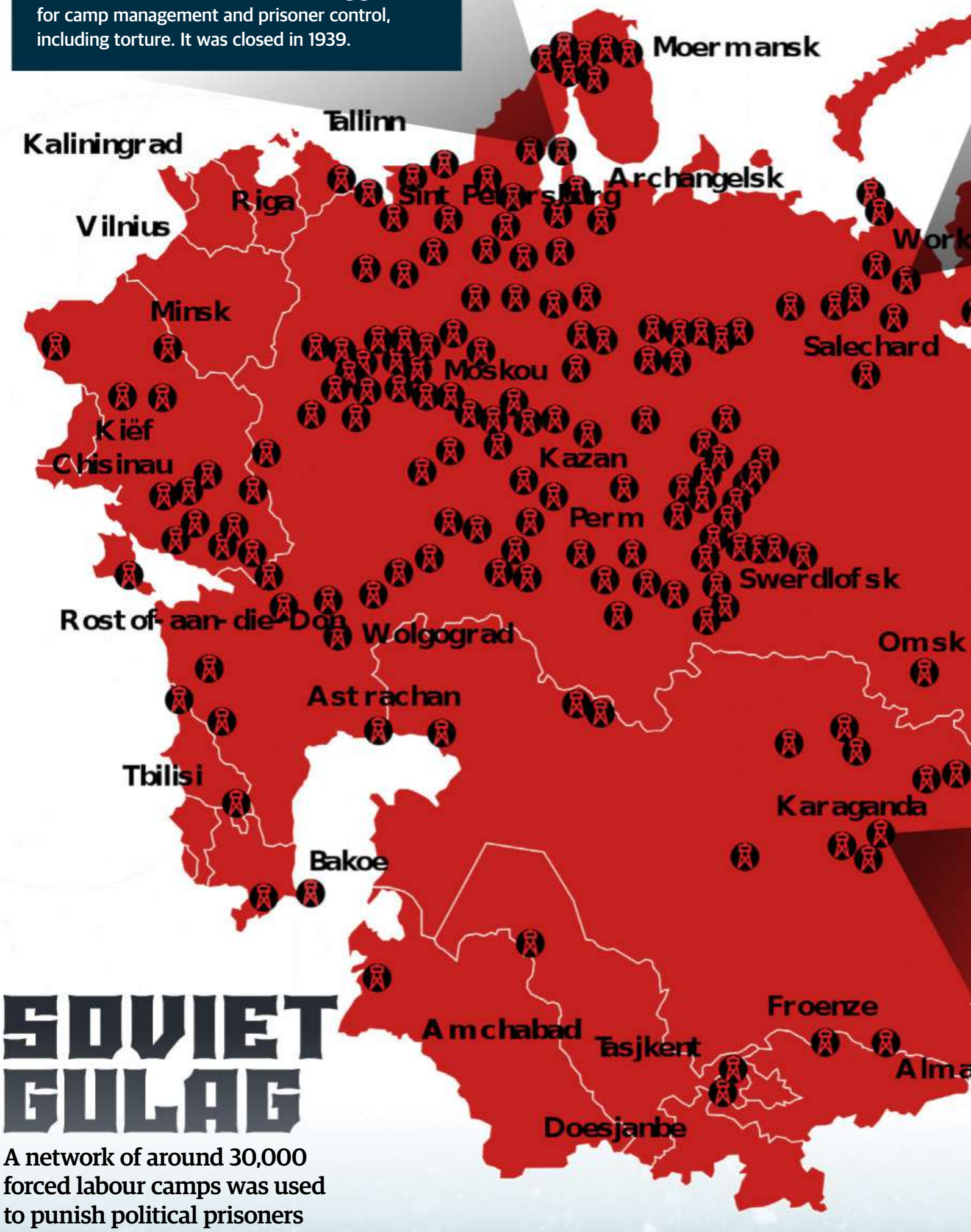
This labour camp was set up on Solovetsky and other nearby islands in Onega Bay in the White Sea between 1922 and 1923. It housed political prisoners who opposed the Bolsheviks, isolating them as much as possible from the rest of the Soviet Union. It became a testing ground for camp management and prisoner control, including torture. It was closed in 1939.

The total gulag population in **1920** was about

100,000

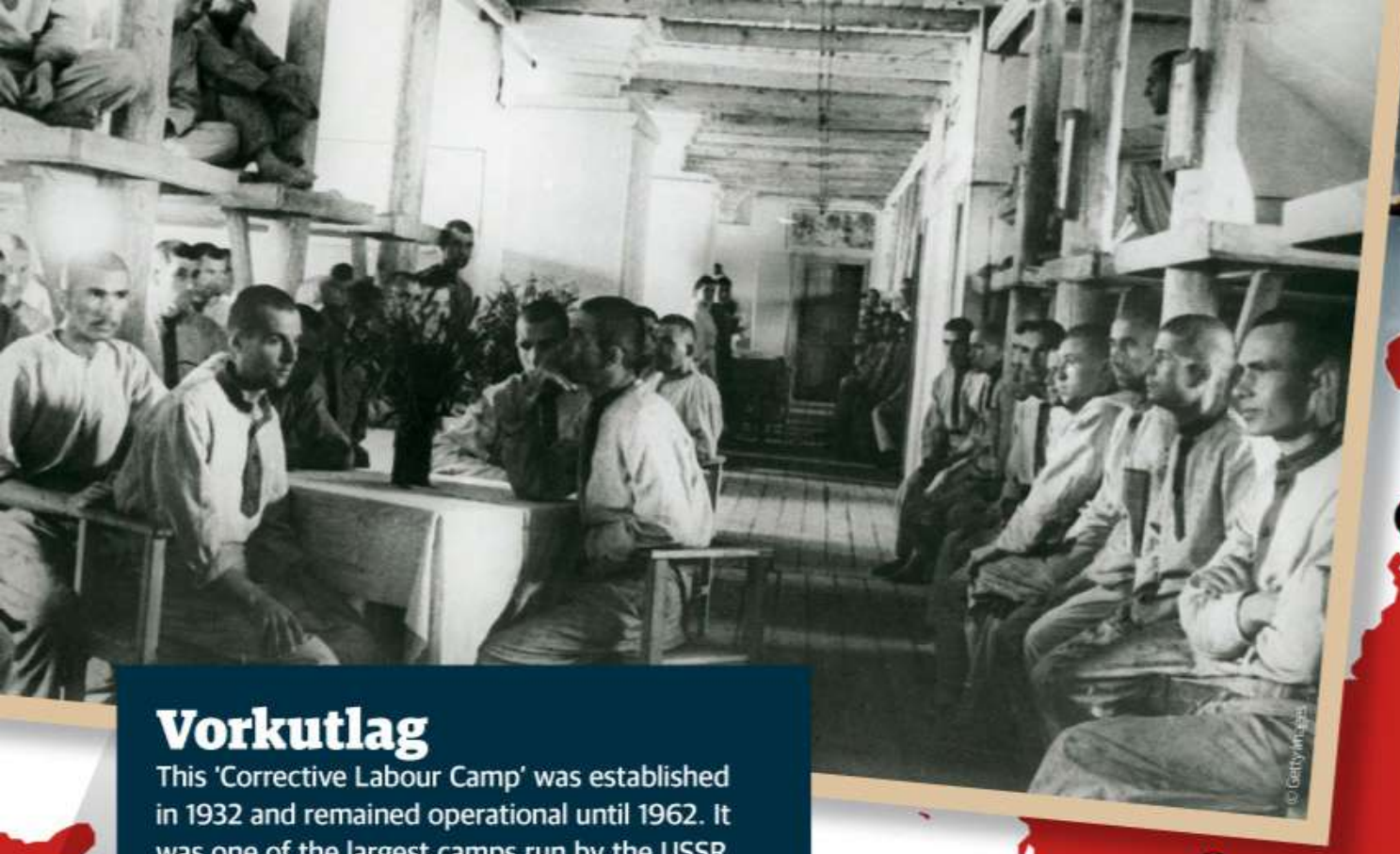
By **1936** it was

5 million



SOVIET GULAG

A network of around 30,000 forced labour camps was used to punish political prisoners



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Vorkutlag

This 'Corrective Labour Camp' was established in 1932 and remained operational until 1962. It was one of the largest camps run by the USSR, housing 73,000 prisoners at its peak in 1951. Those inmates included prisoners of war, political prisoners and convicted criminals. Its primary labour role was coal mining, and it was the site of an uprising in 1953.

The camps were officially closed on

25 Jan 1960

oeta

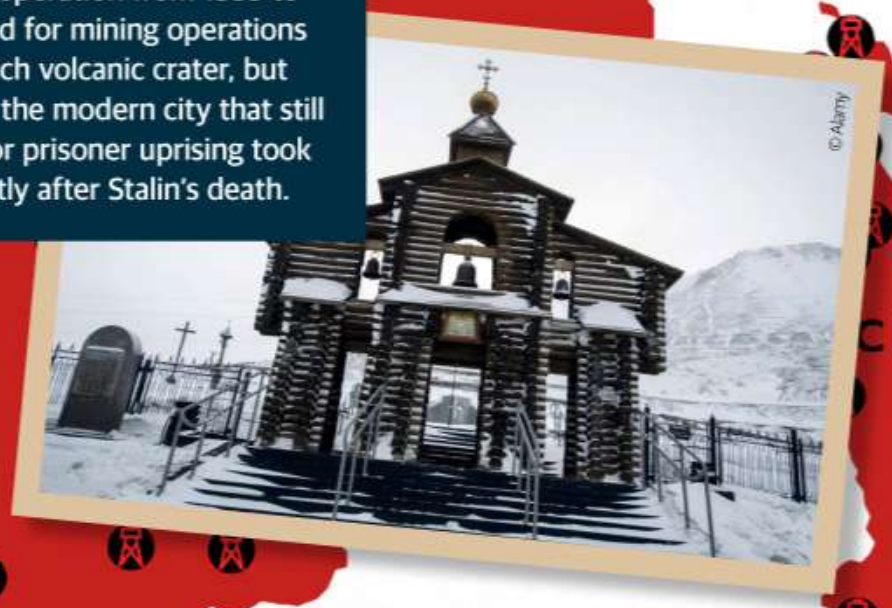
Norilsk

Norillag

Sitting 400km beyond the Arctic Circle, the camp at Norilsk was about as inhospitable as it could get and was in operation from 1935 to 1956. It was largely used for mining operations as it featured a metal-rich volcanic crater, but the prisoners also built the modern city that still sits there today. A major prisoner uprising took place here in 1953 shortly after Stalin's death.

oetsk

Magadan



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Krasnojarsk

Nowosibirsk

Irkoetsk

Chabarofsk

Wladiwostok

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Karlag

The Karaganda Corrective Labour Camp was one of the largest camps in the Soviet Union when it operated between 1931 and 1959. It's estimated that about 1 million prisoners passed through its gates, and they would have been put to work on the region's large coal deposits. As well as political prisoners it was used to house prisoners of war during World War II.

-Ata

Around **10 million** people were sent to camps between **1934** and **1947**

An estimated **1.2 - 1.7 million** people died in the gulag from **1918** to **1956**

Image source wiki/Antonu

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TOP The NKVD spearheaded Stalin's Terror, rounding up dissidents and running the labour camps prisoners were sent to

ABOVE Kliment Voroshilov (left) was central to the organisation of the Great Terror and denounced many of his former comrades in the military

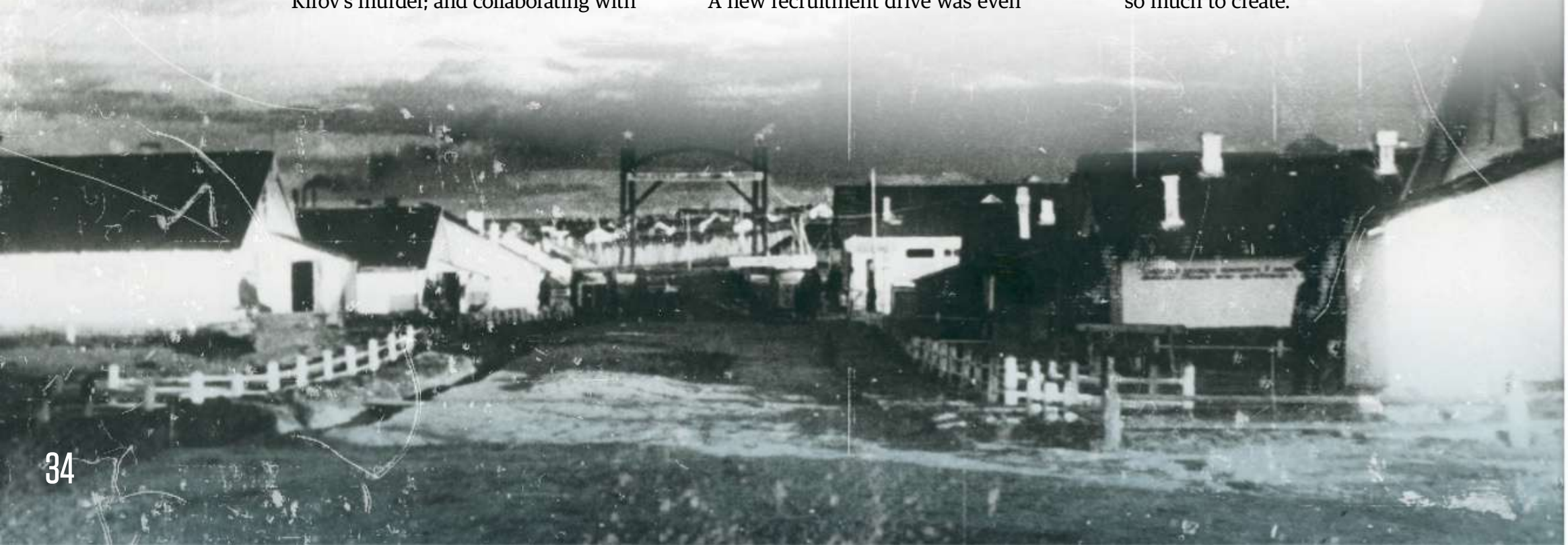
BELOW The Gulag at Vorkuta, one of the major work camps of the USSR

conspiracy theory that had come alive after Kirov was killed in 1934. In this final spectacle the famed party intellectual Nikolai Bukharin and former head of the Soviet government Aleksei Rykov (both one-time leaders of another loose opposition group against Stalin from the late 1920s, the so-called Right Deviation), were put on trial alongside the former head of the NKVD Yagoda and 17 other senior party members. The charges arrayed against the group now reached the height of fantasy and included sabotage; espionage for Japan, Germany and Poland; undermining the Red Army; arranging Kirov's murder; and collaborating with banned socialist parties and the feared Trotskyists. Bukharin was accused specifically of planning to seize power and unsuccessfully attempting to kill Lenin years before. Bukharin, however, resisted the charges against him and attempted to deviate from the script. Initially pleading not guilty, he did his best to undermine the trial. Sadly, this did nothing to alter the result. Bukharin was executed immediately after the trial, with nearly all the others.

"THE GREAT TERROR WOULD NOT HAVE REACHED SUCH A SCALE WITHOUT WIDESPREAD PARTICIPATION FROM BELOW"

Ending the Great Terror

Even though the violence of the Great Terror had reached truly appalling levels, it was beginning to be reined in by the time Bukharin faced trial in March 1938. A few months before, at the end of 1937, Stalin had started to publicly criticise how the persecution of party members had started to get out of control. These criticisms were then repeated in January 1938 at another large party gathering. A new recruitment drive was even launched to try and refill the now heavily depleted party ranks. Any blame for the Great Terror getting out of control was obviously not directed at Stalin. The standard criticism, repeated in the Soviet press, was that 'careerists' and 'enemies' had taken advantage of the crisis. They had denounced innocents to perhaps gain control of their jobs or seize their apartments. False accusations, it was said, were the problem, not the Great Terror itself. Yezhov, as head of the NKVD and the man who had overseen much of the violence, became the most high-profile scapegoat. He lost his position as NKVD chief in December 1938 and was later arrested in April 1939. Yezhov was blamed for what was called, in Soviet terminology, the 'excesses' of the Great Terror. Under interrogation he 'confessed' to being a foreign agent and saboteur, an enemy of the people. Yezhov was at last pulled into the conspiracy theory he had done so much to create.



By late 1938 and early 1939, the Great Terror had effectively come to an end. To understand why it finally had to be reined in by Stalin, we need to look at who else participated. The Great Terror undoubtedly would not have happened without the Soviet leader, and Yezhov was also a significant force, but the violence was not just directed from above. Ordinary people were encouraged to look for 'enemies of the people' in their midst, both at home and in the workplace. This was one of the core purposes of the show trials and Soviet people felt enormous pressure to write denunciations to the authorities as a result. A good portion of these would certainly be genuine, from people who believed entirely that figures like Zinoviev, Kamenev, Pyatakov, Tukhachevsky and Bukharin were traitors to the homeland. At the same time, many denunciations were written through fear. Sending a denunciation was one means of avoiding attracting too much attention to yourself; it was a signal of vigilance and loyalty. And some Soviet citizens no doubt wrote denunciations for more base motives, from careerism or simply as a means of settling scores. If we also consider the huge stresses and strains that Soviet society had experienced in the early Stalin period, with extremely rapid industrialisation from 1928 sparking a steep fall in living standards, dramatic shortages of goods and a significant squeeze on housing, this created an increasingly tense atmosphere that was primed to explode.

The Great Terror began with a cold-blooded murder in Leningrad when Nikolaev stepped into the Smolny Building and shot Kirov in December 1934. Stalin, driven by conspiratorial thinking, then ruthlessly exploited this murder for his own ends, eliminating anyone he saw as unreliable at a time of rising international tensions. But the Great Terror would not have reached such an appalling scale without widespread participation from below, without the hundreds of thousands of letters of denunciation sent to NKVD and party organisations. To truly understand the Great Terror is to see it as a political and social phenomenon encompassing the entire Soviet state and society.

ABOVE A typical propaganda poster from the Soviet Union in 1937 declares Leon Trotsky to be the enemy of the people

The tailoring department of a forced labour camp run by the communists

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FORGOTTEN WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

Helen Bond and Joan Taylor bring new life to the women who helped found Christianity

Interview by Jonathan Gordon

EXPERTS BIO

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HELEN BOND AND JOAN TAYLOR

Helen Bond (right) and Joan Taylor are professors of Christian origins and ancient history. Their book *Women Remembered: Jesus' Female Disciples* came about after they made the documentary *Jesus' Female Disciples: The New Evidence* in 2018, which took them across Israel and Jordan studying lost women from Jesus' real history.

The story of Jesus in popular understanding is a predominantly male affair. Between his birth and death, only two women, both named Mary, really take up any space in most retellings. However, as Joan Taylor and Helen Bond explore in their new book, *Women Remembered: Jesus' Female Disciples*, there is plenty of evidence that women were not only involved in Jesus' movement, but were integral to it.

We sat down with Taylor and Bond to discuss their book, the role of women in the *Bible* and the wider role of women in early Christianity.

What sort of roles did women hold in the early days of Christianity?
JT: Women were barred from certain ordained roles. Today in many churches women still have issues in terms of leadership roles because of this idea that women weren't in leadership roles in the beginning. But of course, these roles developed over time. Even the very idea of an ordained minister in the church is not something that you find in the earliest texts. And what we see if we look at those early texts is a lot of women doing a lot of things, but they're not profiled. They're not highlighted in the text because the texts aren't really interested in them.
HB: And there's evidence that the women are doing exactly the same as the men. They're going out as missionaries, they're teachers, they're taking Paul's letters across the Mediterranean, they're probably explaining Paul's letters to Christian groups, they're probably healing. They're doing everything the men are doing.

How transgressive would a mixed group, such as the one around Jesus, have been in this period of history?
HB: I think some of the things would have been surprising. But all of this is simply what was permissible within a Jewish society at the time. We know that women were on the road, they went from Galilee to Jerusalem with Jesus, but that was very similar to what you have at Passover time. You would have had big groups of people on the road. One of the things that we explore in the book is that a lot of these women were probably related to Jesus and the 12 disciples. So it probably had a bit of the air of a family on the road. Some people probably made snide remarks – there's references to Jesus hobnobbing with prostitutes, and perhaps that was a bit of a snide way of getting at the women in his entourage.
JT: And remember that the early church thought of themselves as a big bunch of brothers and sisters. And some people might have gone: "Err, no you're not." But that was their claim, so that idea of the family really is the paradigm for the early church.

"There's no evidence whatsoever in the *New Testament* that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute"

Mary Magdalene is probably the most famous woman that's known to have been close to Jesus, other than his mother. What have you learned about her real story?
JT: Mary Magdalene is a huge topic and quite mysterious; in fact, our texts in the *New Testament* present her in quite different ways in terms of her role. She sees the empty tomb, but there's a lot of toing and froing about what she actually did in the tomb. I find that quite interesting because it shows that people were talking about her and telling different stories about her very early on, and there might have been some debate about what she saw there. Her witness is incredible because the whole of Christianity is based on it. We wouldn't have Christianity if we didn't have Mary saying what she said, but she was only one of many other women who were disciples of Jesus.
HB: We're really keen to show that she isn't a prostitute. That's a much later

conflation of lots of texts and there's no evidence whatsoever in the *New Testament* that she was a prostitute. I think nowadays people probably realise she's not a prostitute, but then the other thing is the Dan Brown idea that she's the love interest in the Jesus story and we're also very keen not to suggest that either.

What discoveries about women in the early church surprised you?

HB: Maybe just the sheer number of them, actually. I think just the number of them is quite surprising when you put them all together. And also, for me, Jesus' teaching is all about being like a servant. In many ways, you can see how that might have been something that was easier for the women because they were normally in that kind of role. For men, they had to get rid of ideas like chasing after status that perhaps women didn't have to do too much of. In a way Jesus' whole message is to be like one of these women.

JT: I think I got some surprises when I started to go into the figure of Salome. I didn't know if it was going to go very far and if I'd find very much that I would find convincing. I ended up thinking that there was a real possibility she was the actual sister of Jesus – little bits and pieces of the texts indicate she was the daughter of Mary and the sister of Jesus. She keeps turning up randomly in a lot of different texts in the 2nd century, along with Mary Magdalene, with no introduction at all as if everybody knows who Salome is, but of course we know nothing about her.

How have you gone about finding reliable sources to bring these women's stories back to life?

HB: Reliable sources are always a problem. The *Gospels* are our primary sources here, but obviously they're not written to tell us anything about the social history of Christianity, let alone women's involvement in Christianity. They're told to convince people to follow Jesus and the story they tell is largely one of what men were doing.

There's also a problem in the ancient world that if a religion was too associated with females it was considered quite disreputable and slightly dodgy. So, quite aside from the obvious patriarchy of the period, when it comes to telling stories about religion there was an anxiety that you didn't want to put too many women in there. From our point of view, when you do get references to women we can be fairly sure it's just the tip of the iceberg.

One of the important things that makes our book a bit different to others is that we were very interested in looking at material culture as well. We're interested in (where we have it, anyway) amulets that show pictures of the women at Jesus' tomb and later noncanonical texts that preserve oral traditions of the story.

Is there evidence that women were being erased from this history?

JT: Certainly with the Mary Magdalene story at the tomb in the *Gospel of Luke*, there are lots of women there, which is great, but Mary Magdalene doesn't have any special role there. There's always this balance of wanting to include women and make sure that all of those women are accounted for in terms of their story, but sometimes ancient texts can create this concept of a 'bunch of women', rather than focusing on one or two who are actually doing something important. Erasures can happen just in the way stories are told. For example, when Paul tells the story of the empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection in *1 Corinthians 15*, he doesn't mention a single woman, and the *Gospels* do. There's a question of why Paul decided to jump over the women and why he doesn't mention Mary Magdalene. Why doesn't he mention any of the women coming to the tomb?

Peter in early Christian tradition is never considered the first witness to the Resurrection. Paul just jumps over the women there. That wasn't an uncommon thing to do because the witness of women wasn't considered reliable in courts. Women's witness was an issue in all sorts of different cases. If women were unreliable witnesses, you didn't really want them at the beginning of the faith.

HB: But sometimes it's not just erasing, it's also adding in things that silence women. In that same letter that Joan mentioned in *1 Corinthians*, Paul has been quite happily saying that women can act as prophets, that's fine, just make sure you cover your hair. But then later on somebody has actually added a little passage to that letter that says: 'I permit no woman to talk in church, they're to keep silent and to go back home and ask their husband if they have any problems or any queries.' That passage, which nearly all scholars nowadays think is a later addition from maybe the 2nd century, when women's roles were being constricted more, has had a terrible effect on what women are allowed to do in churches and beyond churches; women's abilities to speak out and to lead altogether. In those cases people have actually added something to the text and that becomes the famous thing that Paul is known for, when actually he probably didn't say that at all.

WOMEN REMEMBERED: JESUS' FEMALE DISCIPLES
BY JOAN TAYLOR AND HELEN BOND IS AVAILABLE NOW FROM HODDER & STOUGHTON

MAIN Mary Magdalene remains a greatly misunderstood figure in the story of Jesus

LEFT Phoebe is another woman mentioned infrequently, but she was trusted as a messenger by Paul

BELOW Salome is sometimes identified as the wife of Zebedee and mother of disciples James and John, but may have been Jesus' sister

BOTTOM Later medieval stories saw Martha defeat a dragon, similar to the story of St George

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THE WARRIOR PRIEST WHO UNITED MEXICO

How Miguel Hidalgo became known as the father of a nation and Mexico's George Washington

Written by Eric Van Young

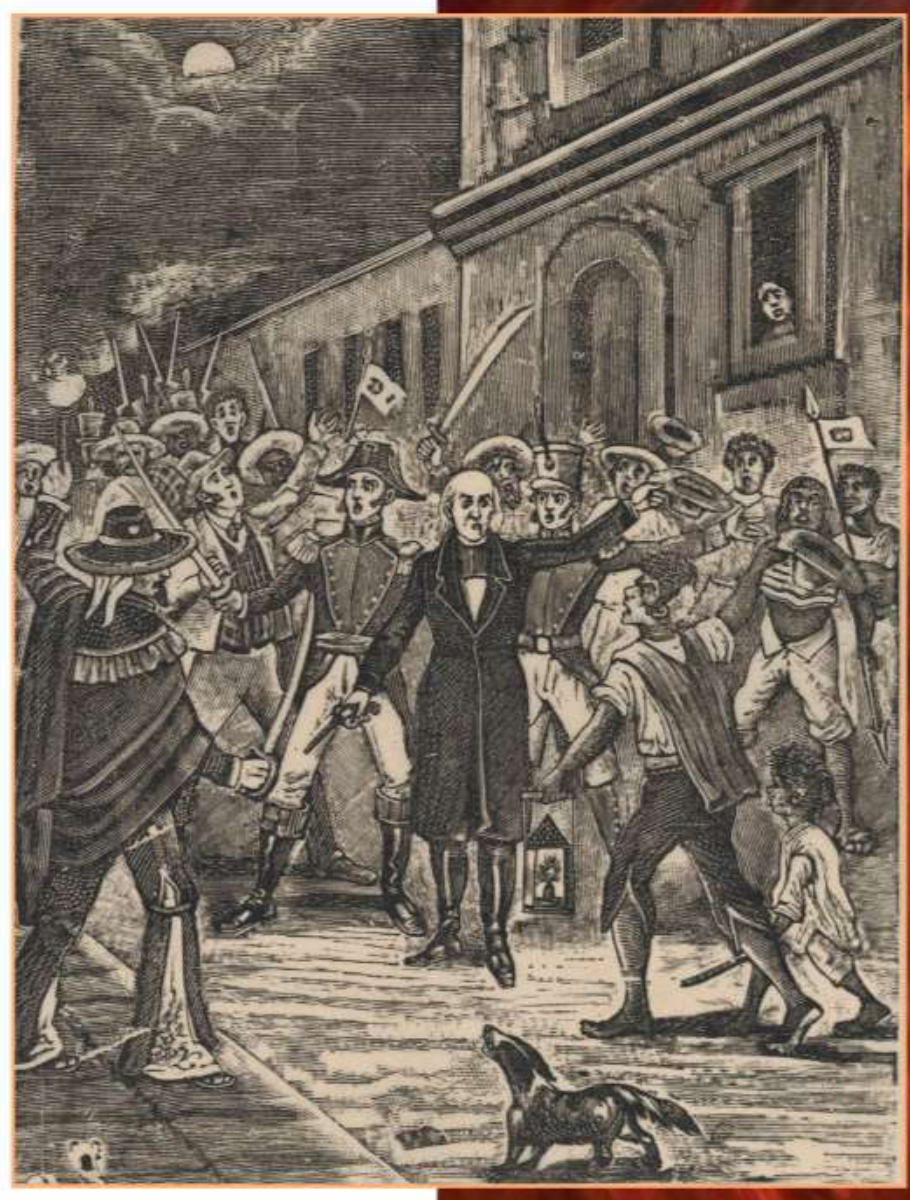
Guanajuato is a charming, idyllic Mexican city with a population of about 200,000, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1988. It derives its deeply romantic atmosphere from its many Spanish colonial homes and 19th-century buildings, steep cobble-stoned streets and crystalline mountain air. Then there's spots like the Callejón del Beso (the Alley of the Kiss), an alleyway so narrow that local legend abounds with stories of star-crossed lovers embracing from balconies on either side. The underground river running through the city's dramatic tunnels flows downstream to the old silver mines and refineries located between Guanajuato **and** the fabled artists' colony of San Miguel de Allende. The numerous silver deposits were discovered in the 16th century, producing vast fortunes and much of the silver that fuelled the commerce of the international economy. ▶

Visitors to Guanajuato often liken it to famous European medieval hill towns such as San Gimignano in Tuscany.

On 28 September 1810 violence engulfed this sleepy Mexican town, its cobbled streets ran slick with blood and the pure mountain air rang with cries of "Mueran los Gachupines!" ("Death to the Spaniards!"). The town's hastily constructed defences, thrown up against an imminent invasion, were quickly overwhelmed by a huge, ill-disciplined army of mostly peasant rebels bearing banners emblazoned with the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The wealthier white residents took refuge with as much valuable property as they could carry in the fortress-like municipal granary, the Alhóndiga, which today is a museum dedicated to Mexican independence. At the start of the five-hour siege the Spanish military officer and royal governor commanding the defenders was killed and his officer son soon after. Later, a mine labourer among the besiegers tied a flagstone to his back to protect him from the gunfire raining down from atop the Alhóndiga and set its huge wooden doors ablaze.

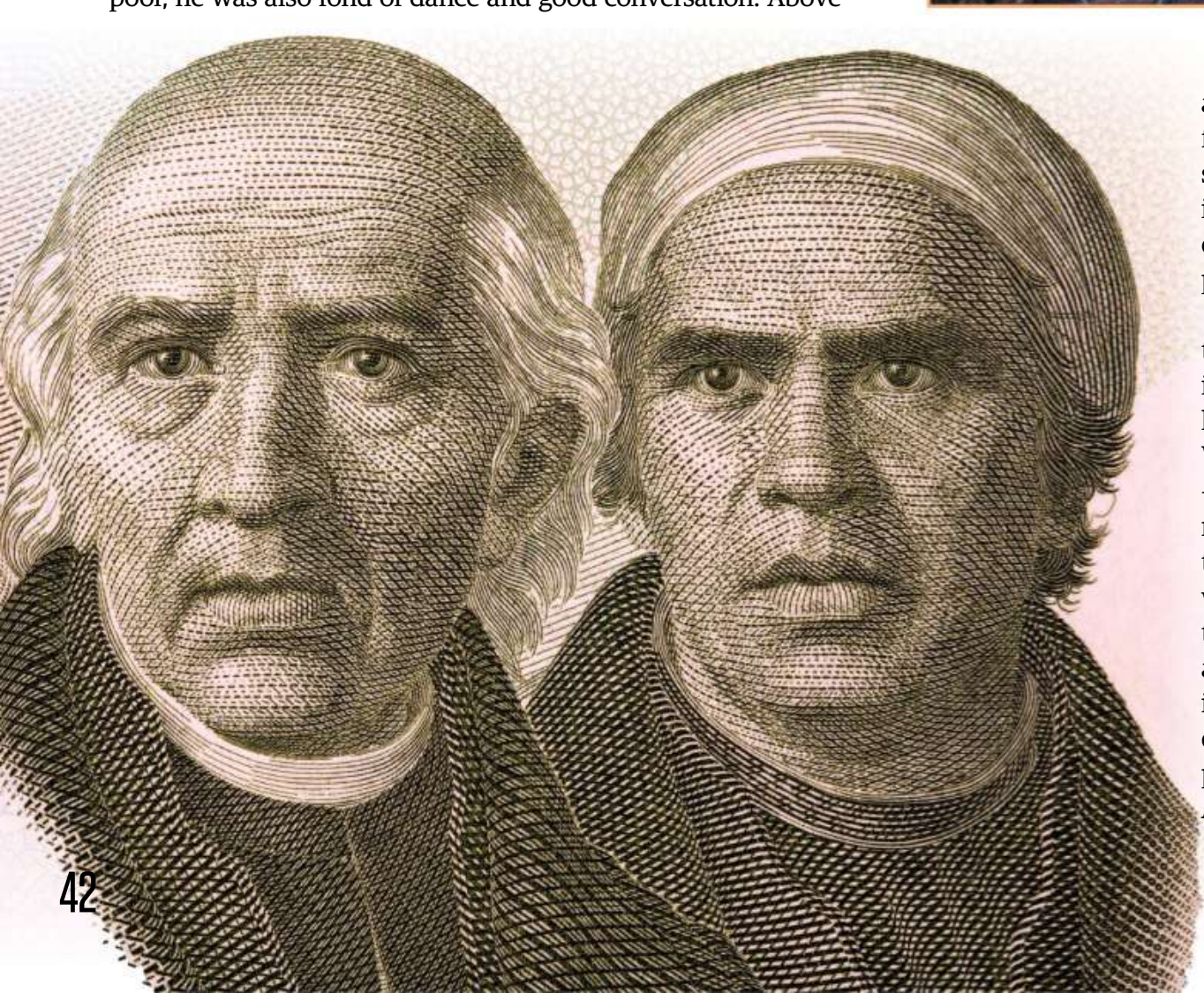
Today this man, Juan José de los Reyes Martínez Amaro, who died peacefully in his bed in his 80s, is celebrated as 'El Pípila' in a heroic monument above the city. The defences breached, the attackers flooded in and when the frenzy of violence subsided the building's interior was strewn with the dead bodies of defenders and Spanish residents who had sought refuge there. Estimates of the dead have ranged between 300 and about 1,000. The valuables in the Alhóndiga were carried off – silver ingots, money, jewellery, even the victims' clothing. For weeks the city's markets sold items of personal property looted from the dead defenders; poor peasants and labourers walked around town sporting silks over their ragged clothing. This famous opening salvo in the violent process of Mexico's birth as an independent nation marked the beginning of a decade of internal warfare in the much-prized Spanish colony of New Spain, as Mexico was then known. Independence came in 1821, exactly three centuries after Hernán Cortés' epic conquest of the Aztecs.

Presiding over the attack on the town, but never in control of its fearful violence, was a middle-aged Catholic priest: Father Miguel Gregorio Antonio Ignacio Hidalgo y Costilla Gallaga Mandarte y Villaseñor. A man of excellent education, wide reading, progressive political attitudes and deep sympathy toward the poor, he was also fond of dance and good conversation. Above



RIGHT Hidalgo leading a crowd through the streets, calling for revolution

BELOW The Congress of Chilpancingo in 1813 endorsed Mexico's declaration of independence



BOTTOM Hidalgo (left) and Jose María Morelos on the Mexican Pesos banknote. Morelos took over leadership of the revolutionary movement after Hidalgo's death

average height, robust in body if slightly stooped, his animated face was dominated by green eyes and a halo of white hair surrounding his balding head. Over the years his liberal lifestyle included the company of several mistresses, his vow of priestly chastity notwithstanding. This was not common among Catholic priests but not completely unheard of, either.

Father Miguel Hidalgo, as he has come to be known, kicked off the movement for Mexican independence from Spain (although it is not clear exactly what he intended, and he didn't actually live to see it realised). Of the rebellions that tore Spain's New World colonies from her and created independent nation-states – Argentina, Colombia, Chile and the other Spanish-American republics (Brazil was a Portuguese colony) – Mexico's was perhaps the bloodiest and longest (1810-21). Mexican independence was a direct outgrowth of the era of Napoleonic warfare that touched virtually all of Europe, warfare which in turn was a product of the French Revolution of 1789. Yet the Mexican insurgency was as much a civil war as a war of national liberation, embracing elements of class conflict (the poor against the privileged) and racial conflict (brown people against white). And it was marked by savage violence, widespread death and

destruction, and profound social disruption. These were not propitious circumstances in which to establish a new nation, as the instability of the succeeding decades proved. The Siege of Guanajuato foreshadowed all of this, since the besiegers were for the most part humble people of colour led by Creoles (Mexican-born Spaniards, of whom Father Hidalgo was one) and the victims primarily of wealthy Creoles who'd grown rich from silver mining, land ownership, commerce or high public office. The American and French Revolutions provided some inspiration for the decade-long insurgency, of course, as did a liberal constitution in Spain herself in 1812. But the inter-racial violence of several largely indigenous uprisings in the Andean area in the early 1780s, and the massive anti-colonial slave rebellion on the French sugar island of Saint Domingue (modern Haiti) beginning in 1791, scared most Mexican whites, especially those of property, into opposing Hidalgo's movement for fear of a race war in which they would be overwhelmed by the brown majority of the colony's population of about six million. One tough Spanish general sent to New Spain/Mexico to put down the rebellion remarked that had it not been for Hidalgo's "absurd insurrection" the country would have gained its independence much sooner.

Making a Rebel

Hidalgo was born in 1753 to a mother who traced her ancestry back to the founder of the important western Mexican city of Valladolid, today's beautiful Morelia. His father was the moderately well-to-do manager of a large rural estate with considerable property to his name. On both sides Hidalgo was

"HIDALGO'S INTELLIGENCE, LEARNING AND LOGICAL THINKING EARNED HIM THE NICKNAME EL ZORRO – THE FOX"

of 'pure' Spanish descent. He spent the first 12 years of his life on an estate near Guanajuato, had several siblings, and lost his mother in childbirth when he was eight years old. His father had the means to send him and his elder brother to study at a Jesuit school in Valladolid, where he returned after a brief hiatus for advanced studies to prepare him for the priesthood. He won distinction in theology courses, but also studied Aristotelian physics, Latin literature and grammar, logic and ethics. Along the way he acquired competence in Italian, French and the indigenous languages Tarascan, Nahuatl (the tongue of the Aztecs) and Otomi. He distinguished himself in his studies with his intelligence, learning and logical thinking, earning the nickname El Zorro (The Fox) for his quick wit in debate over abstruse theological questions. After a time in Mexico City he was ordained a priest in 1778, at the age of 25, but never completed doctoral studies for reasons that remain obscure. Hidalgo himself remarked that he did not pursue the degree because the university in the capital was "a pack of ignoramuses", a clue to his view of himself.

Despite his obvious contempt for the fustian backwardness of the colonial higher education system, Hidalgo taught in Valladolid at the Colegio de San Nicolás Obispo, a sort of hybrid between a high school and an undergraduate institution for young men, which is today an important public institution: the Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo. He came to hold chairs in Latin and philosophy, worked to install more modern curricula, and wrote essays on education and theology that antagonised the theological reactionaries on the faculty.

Image source: wiki/Museo Nacional del Virreinato

RACE AND REVOLUTION

What did it mean to be a Mexican?

The Spanish had run Mexico under the Casta System in which a person's position in the social hierarchy was determined by their ethnic background. Peninsulares were Spaniards who'd been born in Spain and they held the highest rank, with access to the best jobs. Next came Creoles – people of Spanish descent who'd been born in the New World. Mestizos were people of mixed Spanish and indigenous ancestry; Pardos had mixed Spanish, indigenous and African heritage; Indios was the term used for indigenous Mexicans; Mulattos was the term used for those of mixed African and European descent, Zambos were of mixed indigenous and African lineage, and the lowest caste of all were the African slaves.

Those leading the independence movement were mostly from the Creole caste, who resented being looked down upon simply for being born in Central America. They pushed for the dissolution of the Casta System, which helped to bring in support from others who were even more oppressed by its racial hierarchy. After independence, many of the old prejudices remained and slavery was not fully abolished in Mexico until 1837, 16 years after the War of Independence ended. After the 1910 revolution, the term Mestizo was widely adopted as a form of post-colonial identity all Mexicans could relate to, recognising the mix of indigenous and European heritage in the country.

Hidalgo carrying the revolutionary banner of Mexico, which depicts Mary, mother of Jesus, known as Virgen de Guadalupe in Mexico

CHEERS BONAPARTE!

How Napoleon helped kick-start the Mexican Revolution

Until 1808, Spain and France had been allies, invading and occupying Portugal. But Napoleon had a wider plan in mind, occupying parts of Spain as well and starting the Peninsula War with Spanish forces. As a result Portugal and the United Kingdom joined Spain to fight the French. Napoleon's betrayal also forced the abdication of Spanish King Carlos IV and his son Ferdinand VII, replaced by Napoleon's brother Joseph, leaving a power vacuum in the Spanish colonies.

It was in this turmoil that the Mexican independence movement found fertile ground, and revolts erupted in many of the Spanish colonies as the local populations fought to seize control. The juntas set up in the name of the king to try to maintain control were too fractured and weak to hold on to power. The Spanish Constitution, adopted in 1812, set the stage for local representation, which brought additional support for independence.

Hidalgo ascended the ranks at San Nicolás to become rector in 1790, earning a salary sufficient for him to buy three haciendas in the region, yet all of them burdened with debt. In 1792 he resigned the rectorship rather suddenly when it was found that he had accumulated a substantial debt for the institution out of his generosity, extravagance and carelessness with the accounts rather than any questionable intent.

A series of parish assignments followed, bearing Hidalgo inexorably to his fateful encounter in Guanajuato. In 1792 he took up duties as the parish priest of Colima, slightly to the southwest of Valladolid, near the Pacific coast, where he remained only eight months. In short order he moved on to the more prosperous parish of San Felipe de los Herreros, just 80km from Guanajuato, officiating there for a decade. In 1803 he ended up even closer to Guanajuato, in the town of Dolores, earning a comfortable living and residing in a large household that included a younger brother and two illegitimate daughters. (Today the town is known as Dolores Hidalgo, 'The Cradle of Mexican Independence'.)

Through these two decades the good padre enjoyed the favours of at least three women in long-term relationships unblessed by clergy, relationships which produced five children. He enjoyed an increasing degree of personal freedom in Dolores, delegating many of his priestly duties to vicars. He came to the attention of the Spanish Inquisition for his unguarded statements to friends questioning papal infallibility, suggesting that sex outside marriage was a natural human proclivity rather than a sin, making favourable comments about Islam, praising the qualities of republicanism, and expressing Francophilic opinions. But he was never prosecuted. His parish of Dolores came to be known as Francia Chiquita ('Little France') from the informality of social manners in Hidalgo's orbit, and quite possibly also because of his reading habits, which may have included works by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the French encyclopédistes and other writings of advanced social and political tendencies. His home became a centre of literary and social activity for the local elite, and he was on familiar terms with the first families of

Guanajuato, including that of the governor who was later killed in the 1810 attack. Hidalgo also devoted much time, effort and personal wealth to the development of small-scale industry in the neighbourhood in order to create employment for the common people, including the cultivation and weaving of silk, pottery-making, a tannery, and other activities whose products were sold in local markets.

Revolt and legacy

The story of the Mexican independence movement has been told many times but can only be summarised here in the very broadest of strokes. In 1808 Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France, invaded Spain, forcing the abdication of King Carlos IV in favour of his son Ferdinand VII, and of Ferdinand in favour of Napoleon's elder brother Joseph, who became José I of Spain and its American dominions. The French were expelled from Spain in 1814, after six years of intense guerrilla warfare, by a combination of Spanish loyalist and British forces. The usurpation of the Spanish throne created a political vacuum in the Spanish-American colonies. Some elite citizens in Mexico believed that in the absence of a legitimate Spanish monarch, sovereignty reverted to the colonies, while others held that sovereignty stayed in Spain and the ad hoc authorities that arose there in King Ferdinand's name.

The politics of this became extremely complicated and chaotic from 1808. Hidalgo believed that the French regime in Spain threatened the observance of the Catholic faith due to the history of Jacobin radicalism in the earlier phases of the revolution, and that the 'godless' French would attempt to gain control of New Spain militarily. Because of this fear, in 1810 Hidalgo launched an uprising. This quickly gathered thousands of common people into its ranks, inspired by the priest's charismatic personality and by widespread fears for traditional Mexican religious practices. They were also motivated by class and racial resentments against the European-born Spaniards who held much of the colony's wealth and many of its high offices, both civil and ecclesiastical. After a conspiracy with other like-minded men was denounced to the colonial authorities, Hidalgo issued the Grito de Dolores ('The Cry of Dolores') from the door of his parish church to a large crowd in the early hours of 16 September 1810. (The day is now celebrated annually as Mexico's Independence Day). We do not have the text of his passionate exhortation, some approximation of which is repeated by the Mexican president from the balcony of the national palace on Mexico City's Zócalo every Independence Day. However, we know it included something like: "Long live Ferdinand VII! Long live America! Death to bad government!" And later in the rebellion the words "Long Live the Virgin of Guadalupe!" were added.

"HIDALGO IS SEEN AS A SORT OF SECULAR SAINT, THE VISIONARY FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY MARTYRED ON THE ALTAR OF INDEPENDENCE"

After the seizure of Guanajuato and some other early and quite bloody military successes, Hidalgo's disorganised movement, which at one point early in 1811 embraced up to 80,000 people, quickly fell apart owing to mass defections, internal conflicts between him and other leaders, and the much more efficient Spanish royalist military force it faced. Hidalgo was captured along with several lieutenants on his flight toward the United States through northern New Spain, degraded from the priesthood, and executed on 11 July 1811. His severed head was hung in a cage from Guanajuato's Alhóndiga.

The struggle he began was continued by other men; it waxed and waned for a decade, and produced its quota of heroes and villains. Mexican independence finally came in 1821 through a combination of a pro-independence military conspiracy in New Spain by former royalist officers, war exhaustion on both sides, and the political circumstances in Europe.

In the plainest terms, Hidalgo's legacy was the independence of his country. Although today there is still some controversy over who 'consummated' Mexican independence after the rebel priest's early death, there is no question that without Hidalgo independence would not have come about in the way that did. Many Mexican conservatives have painted him as a villain because of the violence his decade-long uprising unleashed, with its overtones of a race war by people of colour against whites, and for what many believed was a legacy of violence and instability in Mexican political and social life that endured for much of the century. But the liberal-nationalist view that has come to dominate Mexicans' idea of their history exalts Hidalgo as the equivalent of George Washington in the United States, or of Simón Bolívar in much of Spanish-speaking South America. Hidalgo is seen as a sort of secular saint, the visionary father of his country martyred on the altar of independence. His image appears in patriotic celebrations, on currency, in works of art and literature, and even in comic books. His name is ubiquitous in the country – a state is named after him, as are a number of towns. The irony is that in advocating independence for New Spain while also acclaiming King Ferdinand VII, it has never been exactly clear what Hidalgo had in mind politically.

BELOW Mexico is depicted as an Indigenous woman, considering her future after the Mexican War of Independence

BOTTOM The monument to El Pípila, the man who torched the Alhóndiga gates on 28 September 1810 to aid Hidalgo's forces

HOW PANDEMICS BEGIN... AND HOW THEY END

We can learn a great deal about pandemics by reading the words of people who lived through them in the past

Written by Peter Furtado

On 20 July 1577, the Day of the Redeemer, the doge of Venice held a grand festival to commemorate the ending of an outbreak of plague that had killed around 50,000 people in the city in two years. A bridge of boats was constructed across the lagoon to the island of Giudecca opposite St Mark's Square, and the city fathers processed across it to where the doge had just laid the foundations of the great church of Il Redentore (the Redeemer), what would become the masterpiece of the architect Andreas Palladio. Every year since, the event has been celebrated, by the whole city, with processions, water-borne entertainments and fireworks.

Not all pandemics are commemorated in such grand style, not least because it can be hard to tell when they are really over – and perhaps also because, as French novelist Albert Camus

All images: © Alamy

memorably portrayed in *The Plague*, as soon as they seem to be over many people want to 'get back to normal', forget the horrors they have endured and perhaps the shameful choices they made. And often pandemics have simply not been seen as memorable public events that deserve commemoration. One such was the deadliest pandemic of modern times that caused perhaps 50 million deaths worldwide – almost 10 times as many as Covid, to date.

Memories of the Spanish flu

In Europe the so-called 'Spanish flu' coincided with the final weeks of World War I, and struck many households that had already lost husbands, sons and brothers to the fighting. The pandemic mostly took place behind closed doors. The press was restrained, politicians took little note, workplaces and towns remained busy, and the whole pandemic was soon little more than a sad footnote to the far more public tragedy of the Great War.

Yet a pandemic, even one as destructive as the Spanish flu, is not all bad news. In December 1918, as the flu was raging across the world, American public health specialist George Price called it "both destroyer and teacher" – the unknown virus had already taught many lessons and raised questions that would have to be answered.

Professionals like Price have tried to learn the lessons from past pandemics to prepare for the next. Even in the best of all worlds it is not an easy matter to prepare for an attack by an as-yet unidentified enemy. Yet in 1972, Nobel-prize-winning immunologist Macfarlane Burnet believed the future of infectious disease as a medical specialism would be "very dull". There might, he said, be "some wholly unexpected emergence of a new and dangerous infectious disease, but nothing of the sort has marked the last 50 years".

Dealing with pandemics

The half-century following Burnet's remarks has seen many more, and more diverse, pandemics than ever before. From HIV to Ebola, from Mad Cow Disease to Zika, from Legionnaire's Disease to Covid-19, the array of deadly novel pathogens has massively grown. And we have been forced to take ever more drastic action against them.

For Covid, we have been very fortunate in having unprecedentedly speedy and comprehensive knowledge of the outbreak and the pathogen, its genetic makeup and evolution, its impact on the human body and its spread through populations. Vaccines and treatments for it have been developed amazingly fast, despite many problems in collecting, sharing and acting on all this knowledge. Without all this, the impact would undoubtedly have been even worse.

It was also possible to build on the relatively recent experience of containing the impact of SARS (2002-04), swine flu (2009-10) and Ebola (2010s). A strategy for comprehensive international sharing of knowledge and skills, with the World Health Organization at the heart of the global response to ward off the next pandemic, was proposed by Bill Gates in *The Next Epidemic – Lessons from Ebola*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, April 2015. Yet in 2020, as had often happened in the past, the professionals were sometimes hindered by politicians failing to act fully on scientific advice or grandstanding for their own purposes. In some ways these politicians were acting like generals who are responsible for fighting the last war, suffering partly from lack of imagination as to what could happen next but also a poor understanding of what actually happened in the past.

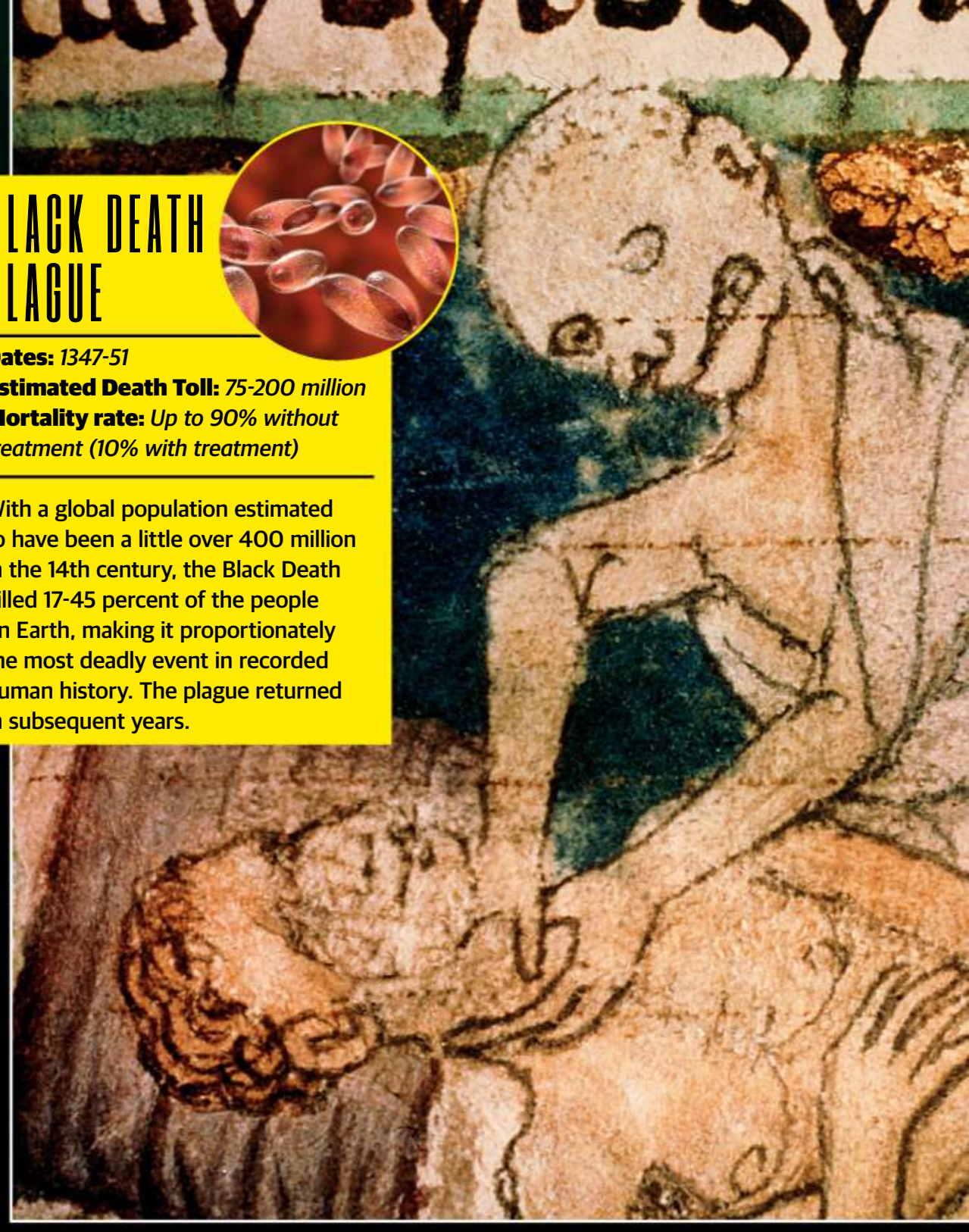
Pandemics, war and empire

Pandemics have not only become more common but also more dangerous in their potential social and economic impacts, at

Black Death plague

Dates: *1347-51*
Estimated Death Toll: *75-200 million*
Mortality rate: *Up to 90% without treatment (10% with treatment)*

With a global population estimated to have been a little over 400 million in the 14th century, the Black Death killed 17-45 percent of the people on Earth, making it proportionately the most deadly event in recorded human history. The plague returned in subsequent years.



ABOVE A 1376 illustration showing death strangling a victim of the plague

RIGHT The plague in Athens is believed to have killed a quarter of the city state's population

"THE SPANISH FLU PANDEMIC MOSTLY TOOK PLACE BEHIND CLOSED DOORS"

SMALLPOX

Dates: *4th century CE – 1980*
Estimated Death Toll: *500 million*
Mortality rate: *Up to 35%*

Until the vaccine for smallpox was developed, it was one of the most widespread and damaging diseases around and highly contagious. Rudimentary treatments were able to keep mortality rates down, but scarring, blindness and other consequences were common.

the very same time as the scientific understanding of them has grown. This seems counter-intuitive but it is because, as William McNeill showed in *Plagues and People* (1976), they are, and always have been, the product of three global trends that have accelerated exponentially in recent decades: environmental stress that causes pathogens to leap from their ancestral reservoirs in the natural world, the concentration of populations in cities, and the rapid mass transit of people across the globe.

As a result, many pandemics (though thankfully not Covid) have been associated with war, conquest and empire. The first recorded pandemic, when a mysterious pathogen struck Athens in 430 BCE, hit in the early years of the Peloponnesian War, a time when the city was crowded with refugees. Though limited in its geographical impact, it left a big cultural footprint as the historian Thucydides was himself a victim, and his vivid account of its impact on the people of Athens in his *History of the Peloponnesian War* provided the blueprint for many later writers. That pandemic also caused the death of the Athenian leader Pericles, but not before he berated the Athenians for the moral decline in civic values and behaviour that the outbreak had caused.

The Antonine Plague – perhaps the first smallpox pandemic – struck the Roman empire in the mid-2nd century CE. It took the life of one emperor, Marcus Aurelius (180 CE) and perhaps that of another, Lucius Verus (169 CE), and was understood even by the Romans to be a direct result of war. In c.385 CE, the soldier and historian Ammianus Marcellinus explained in his *Roman History vol. 2*: "When Seleucia in Mesopotamia was stormed by the generals of Verus Caesar, the statue of Apollo Comaeus was torn from its place and taken to Rome, where the priests set it up in the temple of the Palatine Apollo. After this statue had been carried off and the city burned, the soldiers who were ransacking the temple found a narrow crevice; this they widened in the hope of finding something valuable; but from a kind of shrine, closed by the occult arts of the Chaldaeans, what came out was the germ of that pestilence, which generated the virulence of an incurable disease."

ABOVE The Antonine Plague was most likely smallpox, but could also have been a measles outbreak

ABOVE-RIGHT Emperor Marcus Aurelius was among those who died from the Antonine Plague

Similarly, the so-called Second Plague Pandemic, which began in Europe with the Black Death (1347-51), started when the rats' fleas that carried the plague bacterium were picked up in China by invading Mongol armies, then carried westwards by them across central Asia. An Italian trader, Gabriel de' Mussi, described how the disease was transmitted to Europe, at the Siege of Kaffa, a Venetian outpost in Crimea: "The dying Tartars [Mongols], stupefied by the immensity of the disaster brought about by the disease, lost interest in the siege. They ordered corpses to be placed in catapults and lobbed into the city in the hope that the intolerable stench would kill everyone inside. Soon the rotting corpses tainted the air and poisoned the water supply, and the stench was so overwhelming that hardly one in several thousand was in a position to flee the remains of the Tartar army. Moreover one infected man could carry the poison to others, and infect people and places with the disease by look alone. No one knew, or could discover, a means of defence." The escaping Italians took the infection to Genoa, from where it quickly spread across Europe and the Middle East.

The European age of expansion, beginning with Christopher Columbus' first voyage to Hispaniola in 1492, saw dramatic pandemics associated with warfare and conquest. First to strike was a virulent strain of syphilis, which was first observed in July 1495 among soldiers at the Battle of Fornovo, between a French army and an alliance of Italian states. In his *History of Italy*,

Volume I (1530s), the Italian historian Francesco Guicciardini observed: "Among all other calamities which overwhelmed Italy by this invasion of the French, or were at least attributed to it, a new distemper broke out, by them called the Neapolitan, but by the Italians the French disease, because it showed itself first among the French while they were at Naples, and on their return was spread all over Italy... However, the French ought in justice to be cleared from this ignominious imputation, for it afterwards plainly appeared that the distemper was brought to Naples from Spain. Nor was it the product of that country: it was conveyed thither from those islands which, about this time, through the means of Christopher Columbus, a Genoese, began to be known in our hemisphere." Historians continue to debate this last point; it is possible that several of Columbus' sailors were with the French army at Fornovo.

Within a few years of Columbus' landfall in North America, smallpox and measles – diseases long endemic in Europe and therefore relatively mild to Europeans – began to spread among the native Americans who had no such natural immunity. The Spanish conquistadors in both Aztec Mexico (1519-21) and Inca Peru (1532-33) faced opponents already significantly weakened by these diseases; and in the decades after their conquests were complete the native populations suffered even more grievously. By 1541, the Spanish missionary Toribio de Benavente Motolinía described what had happened in Mexico: "When Hernando Cortés was captain and governor... there was in one of his ships a negro stricken with smallpox, a disease which had never been seen here... When the smallpox began to attack the Indians it became so great a pestilence throughout the land that in most provinces more than half the population died; in others a little less. For as the Indians did not know the remedy for the disease and were in the habit of bathing frequently, whether well or ill, and continued to do so even when suffering from smallpox, they died in heaps, like bedbugs. Many more died of starvation, because, as they were all taken sick at once, they could not care for each other, nor was there anyone to give them food."

Europe's cholera pandemic of the mid-19th century, too, was a rarely noted consequence of imperialism. The disease had long been endemic in the Ganges region of Bengal, but British armies encountered it for the first time in 1817 and took it back to Europe, where it spread in the insanitary cities of the Industrial Revolution. This development was not inevitable, as Scottish medic James Copland explained in *Of Pestilential Cholera* (1832): "It appears extremely singular that... no means of preventing the propagation of the malady were resorted to during the number of years it has existed in the east. Surely... the natives of the country, and the European population under the British dominion had a right to expect that those placed to watch over their health... would have attended to the unequivocal opinions expressed by a number of the best informed medical officers... That no precautions of any description were taken in India to prevent the extension of the disease may be stated without any reservation; and hence most probably the reason of its extension over so very large a portion of the whole globe."

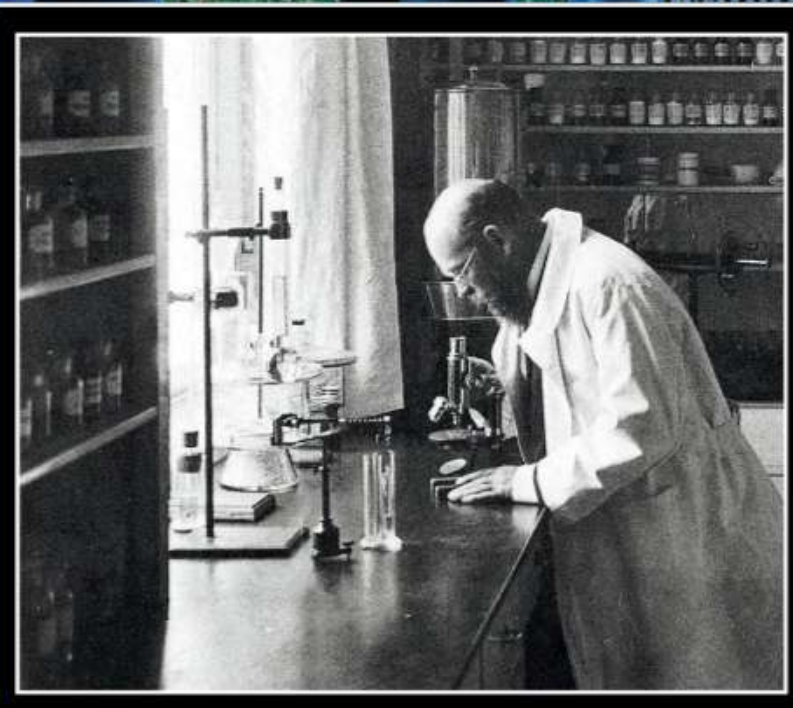
Professionals fight back

Cholera, like plague, syphilis, typhus and other bacterial diseases, has been generally tamed by antibiotics, though

HIV/AIDS

Dates: *1981 – present*
Estimated Death Toll: *32 million*
Mortality rate: *Variable*

The death toll from HIV and AIDS has been massive, but quantifying its mortality rate at this time is very hard as modern treatments have made the virus manageable as a chronic illness rather than something that is automatically going to be fatal. It remains incurable and 680,000 people still died from AIDS-related illness in 2020.



The first vaccine

How the eradication of smallpox impacted our understanding of pandemics

Smallpox has been traced back as far as the Ancient Egyptians, with evidence of its effects left on the bodies of mummies, however its origins remain unknown. The first written description of something like smallpox comes from 4th century CE China.

For centuries, smallpox was a reality of life on our planet, with outbreaks often associated with new trade routes and civilizations coming into contact with one another for the first time, sometimes possibly even due to deliberate exposure. With 30 percent of people infected with smallpox dying from the disease, many attempts were made to cure or control it, such as exposing people who had never had smallpox to sores from the infected to trigger an immune response, a process called variolation. It was in 1796 that Edward Jenner noted that milkmaids who'd caught cowpox were seemingly immune to smallpox. He went about proving his case and wrote a paper in 1801 entitled *On the Origin of the Vaccine Inoculation*. Vaccinations followed and were gradually adapted. The first vaccine had been created, however it was not until 8 May 1980 that the World Health Assembly was finally able to declare the world free of smallpox after decades of global vaccination efforts.

LEFT The lack of response by some government officials to the AIDS pandemic led to massive protest movements

BELOW-LEFT German physician Robert Koch's research into the causes of infectious diseases was pivotal to a number of important breakthroughs

localised outbreaks may occur. And some diseases have been wiped out through massive public health work: notably smallpox, which was declared eradicated in the wild in 1980 after a mass immunisation effort; and polio almost so. Both eradication efforts were hampered by distrust of the vaccine: the polio vaccine has been greeted with suspicion by some Sharia law scholars, especially in Pakistan and Afghanistan (the only places this disease still exists in the wild), while compulsory smallpox vaccination has been resisted by some libertarians who deny the right of the state to force them to put foreign material in their bodies, ever since the mid-19th century.

An impulse to 'build back better' has sometimes, though not always, been a response to the passing of a pandemic. Public health professionals, rather than politicians, have usually been at the forefront of efforts to prevent the conditions for the next wave of disease. Though the pathogen that caused cholera had not yet been identified, in the 1840s and 1850s British reformer Edwin Chadwick and doctor John Snow demonstrated the necessity of clean water and improved sewerage to end its scourge in London. Similarly in Bristol, William Budd was able to reduce the impact of typhus by improving the water supply. Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch and others began to identify the bacterial pathogens for infectious diseases from the 1870s. However, opposition to the 'germ theory' of disease, even from within the medical establishment, meant it was not until 1882-93 in Hamburg that Koch, who had already identified the bacterial pathogens for tuberculosis, anthrax and cholera, conclusively demonstrated that cholera was a bacterial disease spread in water, not in the air or dirt.

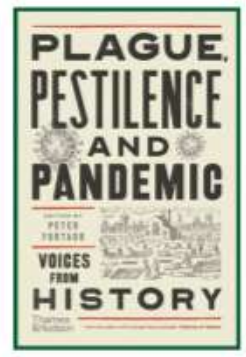
This breakthrough was the beginning of a new era of public health work in the face of a potential pandemic.

"WITHIN A FEW YEARS OF COLUMBUS' LANDFALL, SMALLPOX AND MEASLES BEGAN TO SPREAD AMONG THE NATIVE AMERICANS"

In his book *On the Bacteriological Diagnosis of Cholera* (1894), Koch wrote: "The proper field of bacteriological work is the beginning and the end of an epidemic, when all depends on the correct judging of each individual case, and the swiftest possible prevention of danger to the neighbourhood. In former times the beginning and end of a local epidemic could hardly ever be recognised with the necessary certainty; they were to a certain extent veiled, so that one could indeed trace the rude lines of the epidemic proper, but generally lost the thread towards the beginning and the end. Hence too it came that the first measures were taken too late, and, when the epidemic began to abate, the efforts to combat it were stopped much too early. A material change has taken place in these respects."

For this vision to be complete required – and still requires – three more conditions: the speedy identification of the pathogen (especially a novel one), the political will to implement the necessary actions in a timely manner, and the will of the people to accept them. In those key respects, nothing has changed.

Plague, Pestilence and Pandemic: Voices from History by Peter Furtado is available now from Thames & Hudson



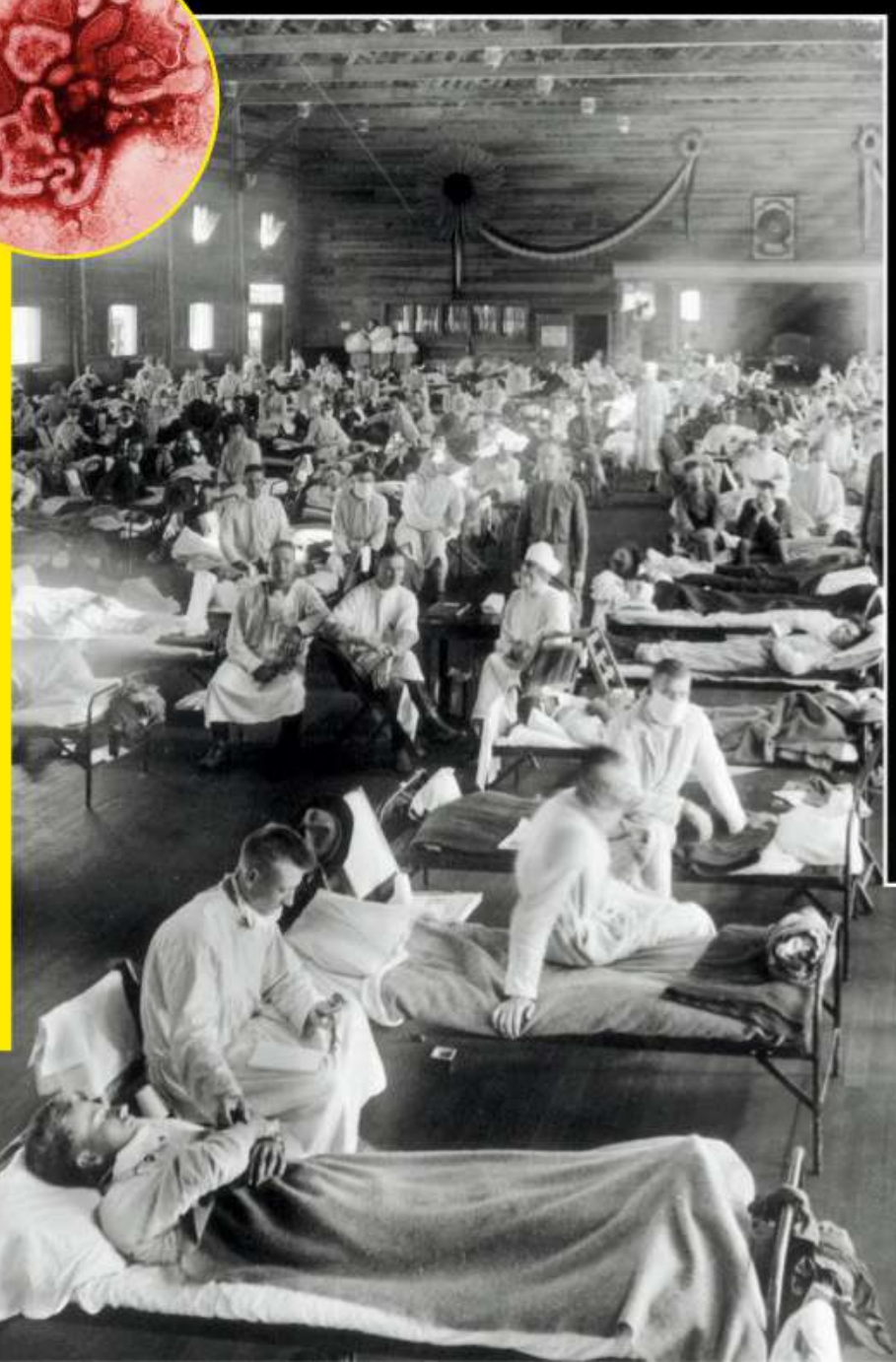
BELOW Spanish flu was so widespread and deadly that special emergency hospitals were created, like this one in Kansas, USA

BELOW-RIGHT A family protecting themselves from the Spanish flu by using face masks

SPANISH FLU

Dates: *1918-19*
Estimated Death Toll: *17-100 million*
Mortality rate: *2.5%*

It's believed that around 500 million people caught the Spanish flu between spring 1918 and summer 1919, which was about a third of the population of the world at that time. It was a strain of H1N1, also known as swine flu, and likely didn't originate in Spain, but it was the first nation to report it.



Warrior Queen of Kyiv

How Olga avenged her murdered husband, outfoxed the Byzantine emperor and forged a dynasty

Written by Heidi Sherman

Grand Princess Olga ruled Kyivan Rus as regent for her son Sviatoslav during a time when outsiders actively sought to control the rapidly expanding trade-rich kingdom. She effectively used her armies and battle-maiden acumen to defend the realm against rebelling tribes, the Byzantine emperor and the nomadic Pechenegs, giving her son a state significantly stronger than the one she was unexpectedly charged with decades earlier. And near the end of her reign, Olga converted to Christianity, the first member of the Riurikid Dynasty to do so, thus encouraging the religion's spread among the pagan Slavs, Finns and Scandinavians of the realm. And for this, Olga was sainted in the Eastern Orthodox Church, the first of a long line of Riurikid warrior saints that gave the state and its princes a growing line of pious warmongering role models to follow as they governed northern Eurasia for 700 years. It is difficult to exaggerate Olga's importance to the history of Eastern Europe.

The role of the dynasty

Little is known about Olga's early life except that her father was an important Scandinavian from Pskov (on the modern Estonian-Russian border) and, in 903, she was brought to Kyiv to meet and marry her future husband, Igor. He was the son of the Viking Riurik who, according to the fantastic tale in *The Tale of Bygone Years*, accepted an invitation proffered by a confederation of Slavic and Finnic tribes "to come and rule over them."

Igor (912–945) spent his reign subjugating the tribes along the major river systems. Once conquered, each tribe was absorbed into a rudimentary tax collection system in which the Kyivan princes extracted 'tribute' in the form of furs, wax, honey and slaves by means of an annual winter tour called the poliudie, loosely translated as "to the people". The booty was forwarded on to Kyiv, where it was bundled into large canoes and transported each spring down the Dniepr River to the Black Sea. The commercial flotilla's ultimate destination was Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. Of course, the Byzantine emperors recognised the peril of opening the gates of the imperial capital to a horde of Vikings and they needed to be convinced of the benefits of peaceful trade with Kyiv. Such misgivings were not helped by Vikings from Rus attacking the Byzantine Empire five times (860, 907, 912, 941, 944) in less than a century. Most of the campaigns resulted in commercial treaties between

Kyiv and Constantinople. Provisos in these treaties included restrictions on the number of Rus allowed into the city at one time (50) and the requirement that the Vikings leave their weapons at the gates.

While Olga does not appear to have played a major role in Kyivan politics during this period, she lived at the Kyivan court and would have been witness to the phenomena described above. After marrying Igor in 903, Olga is not mentioned again until 942, when she gave birth to her son, Sviatoslav, at the rather mature estimated age of 52.

What is certain is that Olga's life changed suddenly with the violent death of her husband Igor at the hands of one of his subject tribes. In 945, Igor and the men of his retinue extorted an unusually large tribute from the Derevlians, a Slavic tribe living in the northwest of Kyiv. Dissatisfied even with the extraordinary amount collected, Igor decided to return for more. Upon learning of his imminent arrival, the Derevlian leader Prince Mal angrily cautioned his men: "If a wolf come among the sheep he will take away the whole flock one by one unless he be killed. If we do not thus kill him now he will destroy us all."

Igor was then duly ambushed and horribly killed by tree dismemberment. There was some logic to the actions of the Derevlians: Igor had already collected the annual tribute and returning for more tribute so soon violated tradition, and he had lost his 'legitimacy by contract' with his tributary subjects. The Riurikid family's control over the realm teetered on the brink of collapse. Igor's successor, Sviatoslav, was a mere toddler, necessitating that the widow Grand Princess Olga become regent.

Olga's revenge

Immediate action had to be taken against the Derevlians since they threatened both the realm and the dynasty. Olga's handling of the rebels constitutes one of the most colourful episodes in eastern Slavic history.

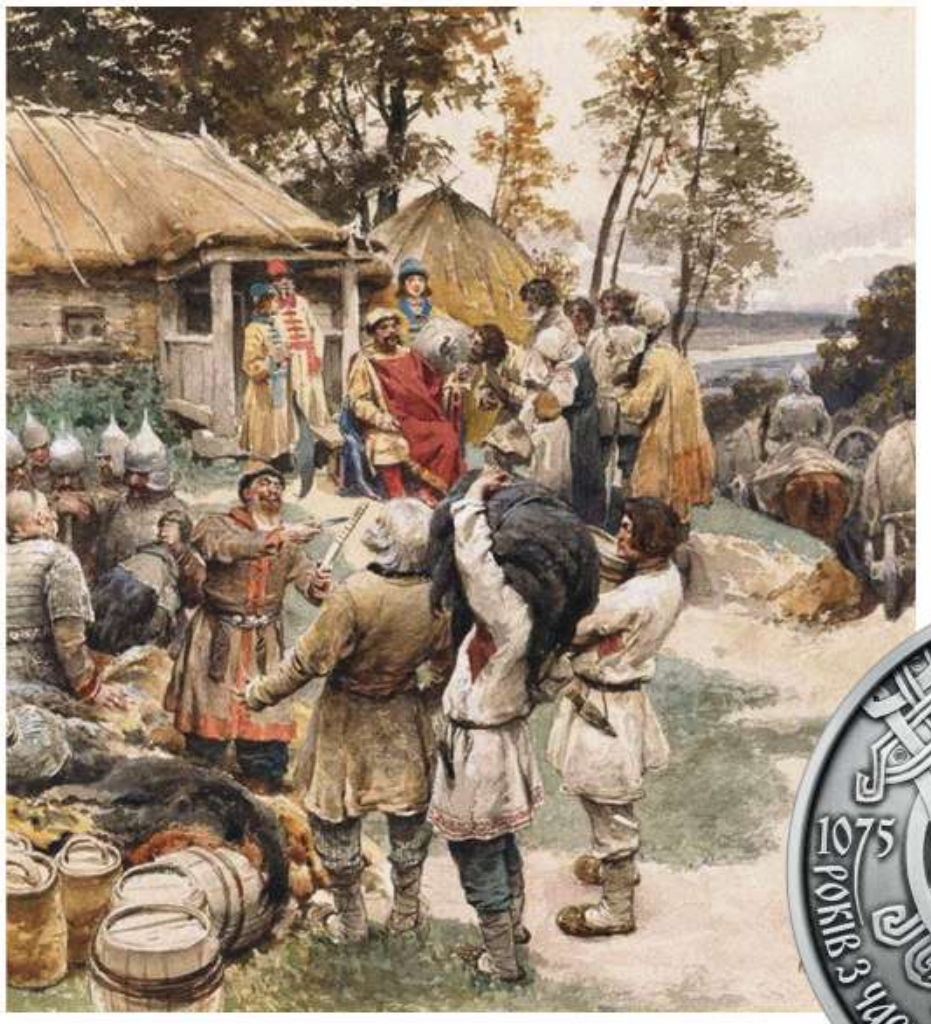
After burying Igor in a large mound outside the Derevlian capital of Iskorosten, their Prince Mal decided to propose marriage to Olga with the aim of controlling the realm's vast wealth. Olga met the Derevlian embassy outside the gates of her capital. After admitting to the widow that they had killed her husband, who was "like a wolf, crafty and ravening", they informed her that their Prince Mal wanted to marry her.

> *"Olga's handling of the rebels constitutes one of the most colourful episodes in eastern Slavic history"*

Olga made this reply: "Your proposal is pleasing to me; indeed, my husband cannot rise again from the dead. But I desire to honour you tomorrow in the presence of my people. Return now to your boat and remain there with an aspect of arrogance. I shall send for you on the morrow, and you shall say: 'We will not ride on horses nor go on foot; carry us in our boat.' And you shall be carried in your boat."

Duly flattered, the Derevlians retired to their camp. It is clear from this point that Olga had no intention of marrying Prince Mal. Upon her command, the Kyivans spent the night digging a deep ditch in their city. The next day the Derevlian embassy presented itself in sumptuous

ABOVE The Derevlians demanded Olga marry Prince Mal, who had helped to murder her husband, and she took the opportunity to get her gruesome revenge



Governing the realm

How Olga rebuilt the power of Kyiv

Resubjugating the Derevlians was only a partial measure towards securing the Riurikid position in the realm. The system that had been in place for several decades, the poliudie, did not bring in sufficient revenue to support the Kyivan princes and their followers. Olga replaced this essentially ad hoc practice with a series of trading stations (pogost) staffed by her own officials, who would levy a standard tax on the subject tribes. Like the earlier tribute, the tax was still paid in resources abundant in each region (furs, honey, wax), but now the state could depend on receiving set amounts. Additionally, the use of royal officials in the collection process freed the ruler to engage in other matters and protected him or her from the wrath of angry taxpayers. The permanent trading posts also appear to have played a role in expanding the territory of Kyivan Rus, especially to the north, from which royal officials could assert the supremacy of Kyiv in areas previously dominated by tribal chiefdoms. As a further administrative refinement, Olga organised the minting of coins, the first of the Riurikid rulers to do so, an action that helped facilitate trade, exchange and the payment of taxes to the princely treasury.

LEFT A Ukrainian coin from 2020 to mark 1075 years since Olga's reign

Image source: wiki/old.bank.gov.ua

dress, demanding that they be carried into town aloft in their wooden boat. According to plan, the boat was dumped into the ditch and the men were buried alive. Olga then sent word to Prince Mal requesting a company of his best men to accompany her to the Derevlian capital. Unaware of his first embassy's gruesome demise, Prince Mal complied with the wishes of his future bride. When the best men of Dereva arrived in Kyiv, Olga invited them to bathe before seeing her. Once they were in the bathhouse, however, it was set on fire and the men burned alive. Olga then set out for the Derevlian capital Iskorosten. As she approached the gates of the city, the grieving widow asked to hold a funeral feast at Igor's burial mound. Still oblivious to the fate of the embassies sent to Kyiv, the Derevlians happily joined her in a great feast at which copious amounts of drink was consumed. When full inebriation ensued, Olga and her army slaughtered more than 5,000 drunken Derevlians.

But Olga's plan had not yet reached full execution. The next year she invaded the land of Dereva. In a final battle, she laid siege to Iskorosten. After a year, the Derevlians offered to pay tribute, but they did not have any honey or furs on hand, so what could they offer her? Olga requested three pigeons and three sparrows from each household. Upon their receipt, her men attached rags dipped in sulphur to the feet of each bird. When the birds returned to their nests, they lit the city on fire and the Derevlians perished in their homes. Olga's vengeance was now complete.

LEFT Olga's attempts to make Kyivan Rus a Christian nation were not successful during her lifetime, but her grandson would finally succeed and she was canonised by the Russian Orthodox Church

TOP Igor of Kyiv demanded more tribute from the Derevlians, so they murdered him

ABOVE The people of Kyiv lifted up the Derevlian emissaries in their own boat and dropped them into a trench, where they were buried alive

Understanding Olga's revenge

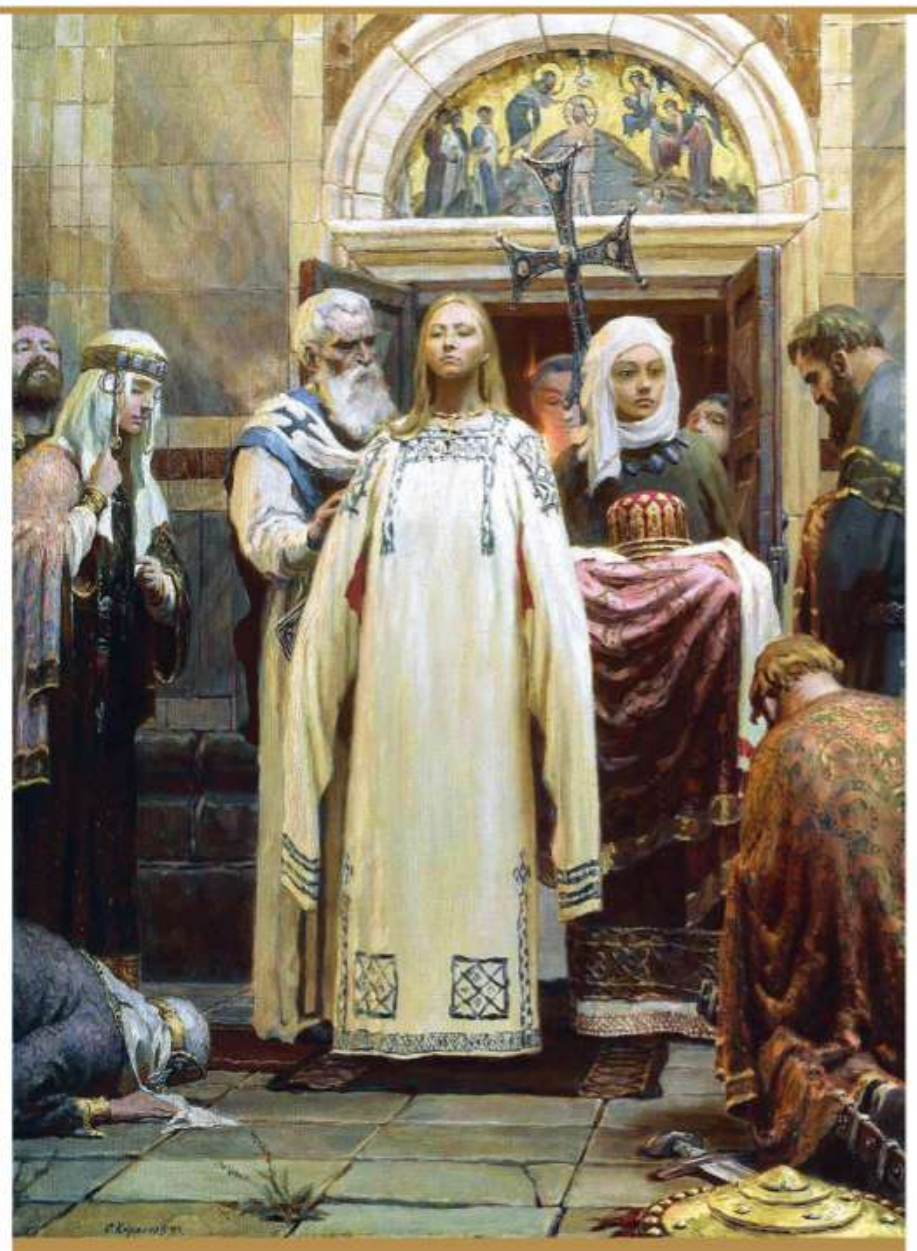
How are we to understand this seemingly fantastic account? Early medieval tales of grieving widows on the warpath should not be taken at face value, since they were employed as a literary device intended both to entertain and, in the case of Olga, to demonstrate a stark moral makeover brought on by her soon-to-follow conversion to Christianity. With the description of the pagan Olga's brutality, the monk authors thus demonstrated the miraculous transformative powers of conversion. This does not mean, however, that the story is pure fantasy. Independent corroboration of Igor's assassination is found in the 10th century Byzantine source written by Leo the Deacon who related that Igor "was captured by them, tied to tree trunks and torn in two". It is certain that military retribution followed. The tale of Olga's vengeance, however, plays another role as a literary allegory reenacting a Scandinavian pagan mortuary ritual. First, the burying alive of the Derevlian embassy in their boats mirrors the Viking practice of a ship burial in which the deceased was interred in a boat with a ritual sacrifice. Second, the burning of the next embassy in the bathhouse reenacts a ritual cleansing by fire. Third, the slaying by Olga's army of 5,000 of the intoxicated enemy represents a funeral feast and an attendant sacrifice. Given the circumstance, it was important for the chronicle authors to demonstrate that Olga was both a dutiful wife and cunning military leader.

Olga outwits the Byzantine emperor

In 954 or 955, Olga travelled to Constantinople, where she took the historically momentous step as the first Riurikid to convert to Christianity.

According to the story as told in *The Tale of Bygone Years*, the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII was so struck by the Kyivan Grand Princess' beauty and intellect that he "remarked that she was worthy to reign with him in his city." Olga replied that this was not possible since she was a pagan "and that if he desired to baptise her he should perform this function himself; otherwise she was unwilling to accept baptism." The baptism was officiated by the patriarch, the official head of the Church and the emperor served as Olga's godfather. Following the christening, the emperor reminded Olga of his marriage proposal. Olga thought it over and responded: "How can you marry me, after yourself baptising me and calling me your daughter? For among Christians that is unlawful, as you yourself must know." The emperor then exclaimed: "Olga, you had outwitted me." She returned to Kyiv with a blessing from the patriarch and rich gifts from the emperor, including "gold, silks, silver and various vases."

Olga's conversion was a bold move because she now belonged to a small religious minority. The overwhelming majority of the population of Kyivan Rus practised a variety of religions that can be loosely characterised as paganism. By the time of Olga's conversion in the mid-10th century at least a small part of the population was Christian, judging from a Byzantine-Rus commercial treaty dated to 944 that mentions 'Christian Rus'. Among the warrior class, however, the number of Christians was certainly small. As its leaders, the Riurikid family could ill afford



ABOVE It was during a visit to Constantinople that Olga was baptised and learned about being a Christian

BELOW Olga kept close ties with the Byzantine Empire, visiting Constantinople in the 950s

to alienate the constant influx of pagan warriors from Scandinavia by a forced conversion to Christianity. Why would Olga potentially undermine the hard-won stability of the realm by making what must have been a controversial move to abandon the religion of her ancestors and most important adherents?

The answer rests in a broader pattern of decision-making designed to consolidate Riurikid authority domestically and strengthen Kyiv's position in relation to its much more powerful neighbour, the Byzantine Empire. With her administrative reforms Olga established a permanent royal presence in far-flung areas of the realm through the installation of

"Olga's conversion was a bold move because she now belonged to a small religious minority"

appointed officials and more formalised tax collection. Converting the tributary goods into cash or luxuries for the court depended largely on Kyiv maintaining positive relations with the Byzantine Empire, since the items collected were bound for markets in Constantinople. Commercial relations with the emperor, however, were far from equal, since from the Byzantine perspective the Kyivan merchants were dangerous pagan idolaters.

But commercial advantages were not the only driving force in Olga's path to conversion. In the 9th century, Kyiv's Slavic neighbours, Moravia and Bulgaria, had already adopted Christianity as their official state religion, and in 966 Poland would follow. Even the Viking kingdom of

Legacy of the Riurikid Dynasty

How the Ukrainian coat of arms takes its lead from Olga's family

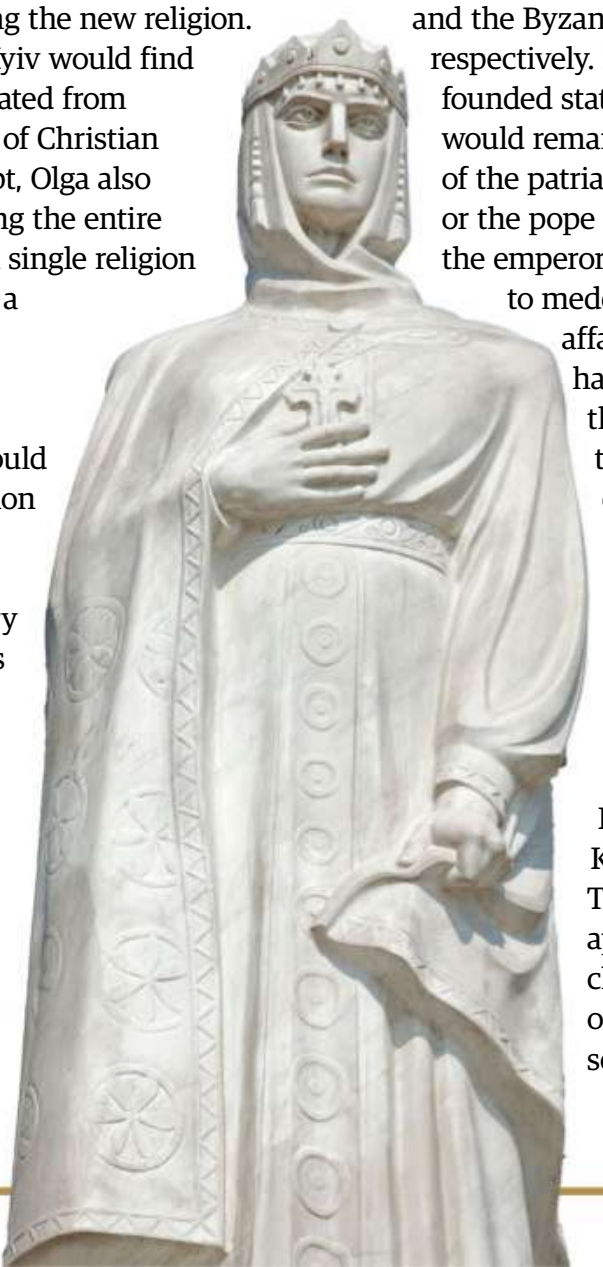
A symbol you may have seen in association with Ukraine is the yellow trident on a blue background. While the colours are taken from the Ukrainian flag, the symbol itself is much older, dating back to the Riurikid Dynasty, of which Olga was an important part. The design changed often in the medieval period, but the symbol that is used today, known as the 'tryzub', is based on the coat of arms of Olga's grandson Vladimir the Great.

The trident appears to have been adopted by the independence movement in Ukraine around 1918 and was used until the Soviet Union conquered Ukraine in 1920. It was later coopted by the Nazi-linked nationalists during World War II as Germany occupied Ukraine, but was reclaimed when Ukraine gained its independence once more in 1991.

In 2020 the UK counter-terrorism police listed the tryzub symbol among a number of white-supremacist and other radicalist symbols that teachers and medical staff should keep an eye out for in Britain. The Ukrainian embassy in London called its inclusion "beyond outrageous", and an apology was given, stating that not all the symbols included (among which were also those of Greenpeace and Extinction Rebellion) were of counter-terrorism interest.

ABOVE Olga and Igor's son Sviatoslav I went on to lead a number of campaigns to increase his power in the region

RIGHT A statue of Olga was originally erected in Kyiv's Mykhailivs'ka Square in 1911, but was destroyed. A marble version replaced it in 1996



Denmark was adopting the new religion. As a pagan holdout, Kyiv would find itself increasingly isolated from the diplomatic circles of Christian Europe. Without doubt, Olga also understood that having the entire Kyivan realm follow a single religion under the auspices of a Church controlled by the state, such as that which existed in the Byzantine Empire, would encourage centralisation of the kingdom.

Establishing a state church in 10th-century Europe was a perilous exercise. Christianity was divided into two rival institutions, the Catholic Church centred in Rome and the Orthodox Church in Constantinople, and each was controlled by the Holy Roman Emperor and the Byzantine Emperor respectively. Most often the newly founded state Church institutions would remain under the control of the patriarch in Constantinople or the pope in Rome, providing the emperors the opportunity to meddle in the local state affairs. Olga appears to have been aware of the potential threat to Kyivan autonomy during her visit to Constantinople. Her hesitation is evinced by her clever refusal of the Byzantine emperor's proposal of marriage. In this way Olga averted Byzantine conquest of Kyiv through marriage. The downside of her approach became clear by the autumn of 959, when Olga sent a request to the Byzantine emperor's nemesis, Emperor Otto I, the secular protector of the papacy. The German chronicler Adalbert records that Olga asked for "the ordination of a bishop and priests for... [her] people".

Olga's goal of founding a Church institution in Kyiv would not be realised until the reign of her grandson Vladimir. Her failure, however, likely helped preserve Kyiv's autonomy from Germany and Byzantium because both of these states were enormously powerful in the mid-10th century, and a Kyivan Church controlled by either of them might well have proved detrimental for the future strength of the realm.

Olga's retirement

In 962, Sviatoslav came of age and began his rule in Kyiv. Like his father, the young ruler was a warrior who ruled by conquest, which brought him into conflict with the Byzantine emperor. Olga ruled Kyiv during her son's long absences, taking care of his young sons Yaropolk, Oleg and Vladimir. In 968, Sviatoslav's warmongering against the empire provoked an all-out attack on Kyiv by the Byzantine allies, the Turkic Pechenegs. The siege that ensued was a lengthy one and the Kyivan people, led by Olga, endured significant hardship while Sviatoslav remained in Preslav, Bulgaria. The now elderly Olga had to escape across the Dniepr River by boat with her grandchildren in tow. A seemingly contrite Sviatoslav then returned to Kyiv and drove the Pecheneg army away. Olga died soon after of old age, but not before she arranged for herself a funeral in the Christian rite officiated by a priest. She wanted neither a burial mound nor a funeral feast, which were pagan traditions.

Her family revered Olga and, while she failed to persuade her son and grandsons to convert during her lifetime, the memory of her devotion to Orthodoxy in later life played a not insignificant role in the family's eventual turn to Byzantine Christianity. Centuries later Olga's deep piety was repeatedly mentioned by medieval authors, who describe her as "radiant among infidels like a pearl in the dung." She was 'The Sainted Olga' who always "sought the wisdom of God," and "although she was a woman in body, she possessed a man's courage." The exact date of her canonisation by the Russian Orthodox Church is unknown, but it followed closely upon the elevation to sainthood of Vladimir in the late 13th century, making Olga the only woman to be included in this first group of homegrown Russian saints.

All images: © Alamy

WATCH THE SKIES!

From 1947 onwards America found itself in the grip of a flying saucer frenzy – but were these sightings really invaders from Mars?

Written by Callum McKelvie

"Keep looking, keep watching the skies!" Douglas Spencer proclaims during the final moments of the 1951 sci-fi horror film *The Thing From Another World*. From 1947 onwards that's just what America was doing as the nation became gripped by a flying saucer frenzy. The birth of the UFO phenomenon is one of the most intriguing moments in late 1940s and '50s popular culture. During this period some of the most infamous UFO sightings of the 20th century occurred, and places like Roswell became synonymous with visitors from other planets and sinister conspiracies. But as the world entered one of the hottest phases of the Cold War, just why was America obsessed with "watching the skies"?

As far as historians have been able to tell, the beginning of the flying saucer craze can be traced back to events that occurred on 24 June 1947 when businessman and amateur aviator Kenneth Arnold witnessed something strange in the airspace above Mineral, Washington. Arnold was circling in his small private plane around the area surrounding Mount Rainier where a Marine Corps plane was said to have recently crashed. There was a $5,000 reward for anyone who located the wreckage, but Arnold would find something far more eerie in the skies above the mountains. It began when he was startled by a blue flash in the periphery of his vision. The surprised pilot looked around desperately but could see nothing except a DC-4 aircraft roughly 25km away, which couldn't possibly have caused the strange glow. Suddenly, Arnold saw nine bright boomerang-shaped objects flying in "a diagonally stepped-down, echelon formation". Upon realising that the objects were travelling a distance of some 80km in the space of one minute and 42 seconds, Arnold worked out that they were travelling 2,735kph – more than twice the

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EXPERT BIOS

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DR DAVID CLARKE

David Clarke is associate professor at Sheffield Hallam University's Centre for Contemporary Legend. He is the author of *How UFOs Conquered the World* (Aurum Press, 2015) and *The UFO Files: The Inside Story of Real-Life Sightings* (Bloomsbury, 2012).

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CIAN GILL

Gill is a scientist who researches and presents *Wide Atlantic Weird*, a podcast about fringe beliefs. His interests include cryptozoology, Victorian fantasy fiction, and the early years of UFO lore.

speed of sound. At this point it is worth remembering that no jet had yet broken the sound barrier. The next day Arnold gave an interview on the matter to a reporter from the *East Oregonian* – little did he or the journalist realise the effect that his story would have. According to *Smithsonian Magazine*, by the end of 1947 there were almost 300 UFO sightings – the United States was in the grip of a 'flying saucer frenzy'.

But if Arnold said he saw 'boomerang shapes' then why did UFOs come to be known as 'flying saucers'? "When he landed and described what he had seen, he was still talking about crescent shapes," says Dr David Clarke, UFO expert and associate professor at Sheffield Hallam University's Centre for Contemporary Legend. The crucial mistake that Arnold made was in the phrase he used to describe the movement of the objects he saw. Cian Gill, host of *Wide Atlantic Weird*, a podcast about unexplained phenomena, says: "When Arnold described the craft to the press he used this very strange turn of phrase and said that they moved 'like a saucer if you skip it across the water'." However, despite Arnold describing only the movement of the objects as 'like a saucer', the key phrase had been used and was about to redefine the popular image of the 'alien spacecraft' forever.

"The sub editor (or whoever it was, no one's actually been able to name them) put 'flying saucers' and that was syndicated right across North America," explains Clarke. "So virtually every newspaper carried the story and that quickly spread to the European papers and even as far as Australia." The term 'flying saucer' seems to have tapped into something in the public consciousness. "In the years that followed, you've got people reporting having seen 'flying saucers'. How did that come about?" Clarke muses. "Clearly, a lot of them did actually see things in the sky. Later, the US Air Force [USAF] collected peoples' descriptions of these things and found that there was no consensus of what people were seeing yet. Some people did see saucers, but others saw rocket- or pyramid-

Of all the noted UFO sightings of the 1950s, one still sends a shiver down the spine...

THE FLATWOODS MONSTER!

Flatwoods is a small town in Braxton County in the hills of West Virginia. At 7.15pm on 12 September 1952, events occurred there that meant, ever since, Flatwoods has been associated with a terrifying apparition. Three teenage boys were playing in their schoolyard when they saw something red and fiery fly across the sky, appearing to crash at a local farm. One of the boys fetched his mother, Mrs May, and the group made its way to the farm. Approaching the site through the woods the group saw something that would haunt them forever.

The creature was described by the 17-year-old Gene Lemon as a "10ft monster with a blood-red body and a green face that seemed to glow". Two vast beams of light appeared to project outward from its eyes and scour the dense mist. As the light from Lemon's torch hit the creature, they were able to see it clearer. The monster was described as having a green body, and Mrs May said it had drape-like folds. (Some of the boys present disputed this, instead describing the creature as dark in colour.) Its face was round and red, with a hood-like shape surrounding it. The monster was seen for only the briefest moment before it let out a terrifying hiss and glided menacingly towards the group. In sheer terror, the boys and Mrs May fled through the trees.

A number of explanations have been given over the years for what the group saw. A meteor did pass over the village and was seen by numerous people, explaining the bright light in the sky. Ufologist Major Donald Keyhoe claimed that the US Air Force had sent two investigators who determined that the meteor had "merely appeared to be landing when it disappeared over the hill". But what of the monster? According to Keyhoe, the investigators concluded that the creature was "probably a large owl perched on a limb". Various other accounts and the work of sceptic Joe Nickell would seem to corroborate this, but the legend of the Flatwoods Monster lives on and today the little town remains a popular tourist attraction.

shaped things. But for the majority of people, objects from outer space were disc-shaped and that remained the case through the 1950s. That was the overwhelming idea of what a spacecraft should look like."

A name that has become synonymous with UFO conspiracies is Roswell in New Mexico. However, the supposed 'incident' there at the time was only a flash in the pan. "In July of 1947 a rancher by the name of Mac Brazel found some debris strewn across his farm," Gill explains. "He didn't think too much of it and indeed forgot about it for several weeks." However, as news of the recent saucer phenomenon began to reach Brazel's ears, he started to think of his mysterious find a little differently. Given the 'wreckage' included tinfoil and pieces of rubber, it's hard to fathom how anyone could have believed him but the story was given an extra lease of life when the USAF got involved. "They immediately put out a statement saying 'yes, this is one of those flying saucers we've been reading about'," Gill says. "It's kind of hard to imagine why they would have done this." Whatever the reason, within hours a second statement was released announcing that Brazel's find was in fact a weather balloon.

But what was it that had *actually* crashed at Roswell? Calling it a downed weather balloon was not too far from the truth. The wreckage was part of top-secret project, Mogul, described by James Michael Young in a 2020 issue of *Airpower History* as seeking to "develop a technique capable of recording the sound of a nuclear detonation deep within the Soviet Union. The idea was to place acoustic sensors (ie quasi microphones) on balloons that operated at a steady state within the stratosphere". Over 100 balloons were launched between 1947 and 1950. Despite the majority of information concerning Mogul now being declassified, this has not ended speculation about the Roswell incident. The modern version of the story was first developed in a 1980 book by Charles Berlitz and William Moore. "This is when other elements get added to the story," Gill explains. "People start saying wreckage and alien bodies were found and that they were taken somewhere to a secret base – it spirals out from there."

But Roswell was not alone in its tale of a crashed alien spacecraft somewhere in the southwest desert.

LEFT Kenneth Arnold, whose 1947 UFO encounter triggered a flying saucer frenzy

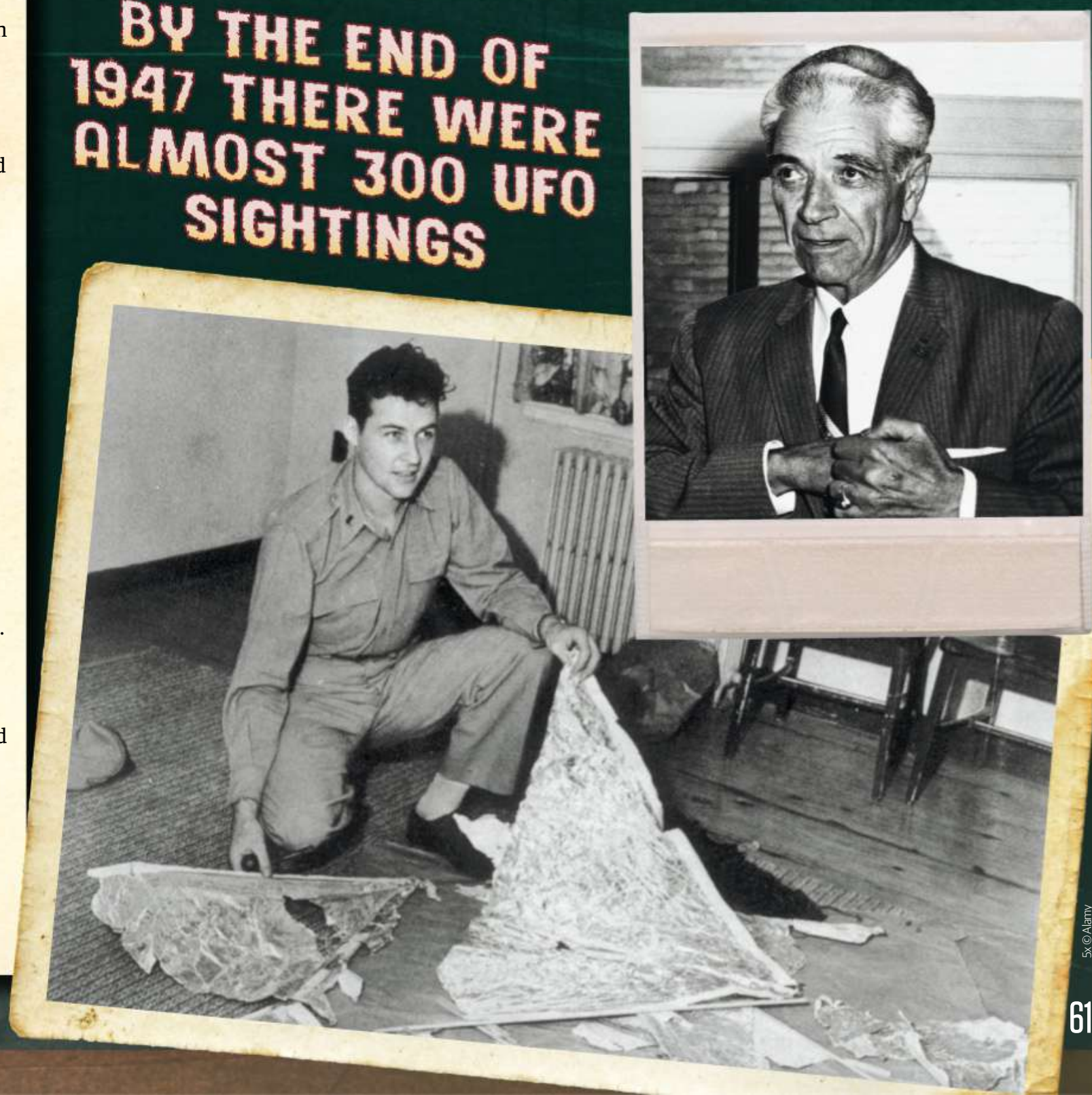
LEFT-INSET A 1948 copy of *Fate* magazine with an illustration of Arnold's encounter on the cover

BELOW-RIGHT George Adamski, who claimed to have not only met aliens but been taken on journeys around the solar system

BOTTOM Irving Newton with the wreckage of the supposed flying saucer found by rancher Mac Brazel in Roswell, New Mexico

"There were a couple of other crashed saucer cases that were outed as being rather ridiculous scams," says Gill. "For example, in 1949 there was the Aztec New Mexico case." This scam involved two confidence tricksters, Silas M Newton and Leo A Gebauer, who attempted to sell 'alien technology' from a supposed crash site. The device created from this 'alien tech' was the inventively named 'Magnetic Doodlebug'. "They were these fake machines pretending to show you how to search for gold in the desert," says Gill. However ludicrous the prospect, industrialist Herman A Flader was convinced to invest some $34,000 in the project, according to a contemporary *Time* magazine article. A popular book by Frank Scully, *Behind the Flying Saucers*, also helped put Newton and Gebauer's scam in the limelight, promoting much of their evidence as real. "Some folks believe that like Roswell it would have been tarred with this brush and that might have been part of the reason it left the pop culture consciousness relatively quickly," Gill concludes.

A year preceding this event the UFO craze became disturbingly real when 25-year-old USAF Captain Thomas F Mantell was killed chasing a UFO in the skies above Kentucky. According to Carl L Devito in his book *Space, Life, Science and Stories*, on 7 January 1948 a "silvery and spherical" object was seen in the sky by numerous witnesses, both military and civilian. Four USAF aircraft returning from a routine training mission received a call from Godman Army Airfield to investigate. The leader of the group, the aforementioned Mantell, was not equipped with the oxygen necessary to travel higher than 12,000 feet. Soon alone and pursuing the strange object, Mantell reported seeing it directly in front of him before it all went horribly wrong. "Mantell stops talking," Gill says. "There's three minutes of radio silence and then he's gone. They find the plane crashed and his watch had shattered at three minutes after



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SAUCERS ON THE SCREEN

As UFO-mania gripped the West, filmmakers got in on the act: here are six of the best and downright peculiar 50s sci-fi flicks!

Invaders from Mars (1953)

A haunting, dreamlike film, *Invaders From Mars* follows a young boy who witnesses a spacecraft land in a local sandpit. When his parents investigate they become taken over by a malevolent alien force. A film more interested in exploring a child's nightmares than an extra-terrestrial attack, it quickly developed a cult reputation.

It Came From Outer Space (1953)

The first movie released by Universal in 3D, this thought-provoking sci-fi film was based on a story by Ray Bradbury. It follows a schoolteacher who witnesses a meteorite-like object land in the desert surrounding a small Arizona town. As strange things begin to happen, tension brews between the townsfolk and whatever is at large in the desert.

Devil Girl from Mars (1954)

A campy classic, the titular 'devil girl' is Nyah, who (clad in provocative black leather) wants to kidnap the male population of Earth so they can mate with the all-female population of Mars. Being a British film, the action takes place almost entirely in and around a local pub.

Teenagers from Outer Space (1959)

This romp tapped into the flying saucer craze and the new obsession with juvenile delinquency that led to a boom of B-movies aimed at teenagers. A group of aliens land their saucer on Earth, with one young invader falling in with the local teens.

Invasion of the Saucer-Men (1957)

This quirky little B-movie is best remembered for its alien designs, with oversized heads and huge bulging eyes. With its tongue placed firmly in its cheek, it follows a group of teenagers who repel an alien attack on their town.

I Married a Monster From Outer Space (1958)

Nowhere near as ludicrous as its title suggests, this film follows Marge, a newlywed who comes to believe that her husband, Bill, is not quite the man he was when she met him. Of course Bill, along with the other men in the town, is revealed to be an alien in a thought-provoking film that continues to be a cult favourite among sci-fi fans.

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Members of the US Air force at a news conference to discuss a project to capture visual data on UFOs using 200 cameras

they last had contact." During his last radio contact Mantell had informed the control tower that he was already at 15,000 feet and still climbing in an attempt to get a closer look at the object. "The standard explanation is that whatever he was chasing went up past 15,000 feet, he didn't have any oxygen, and he passed out and crashed," continues Gill. "However, rumours started due to the mysterious nature of the object he was chasing. One rumour was that it was some kind of Soviet missile – which given the Cold War context is a fairly natural explanation for the time."

By this point the mysterious objects were beginning to have very real security implications. Project Blue Book was an operation undertaken by the USAF to study the increasing number of UFO reports. Active between 1952 and 1969, it built on earlier USAF projects such as Project Sign and Project Grudge. Blue Book hired astronomer Josef Allen Hynek as supervisor. "They wanted a scientist, someone who wasn't military and who would have a dispassionate attitude," Gill explains. "He's a superstar, he's one of the biggest names in UFO culture." Some 12,618 sightings were reported to Project Blue book, and 701 remained unexplained at the time of its closure. "The man in charge was a captain called Ed Roper," Clarke explains. "He was the person who effectively coined the acronym UFO. From the point of view of the

ABOVE-INSET This 'saucer' was supposedly found at West Orange quarry

ABOVE A 1952 photograph showing a cluster of four bright objects in the sky over Salem, Massachusetts

RIGHT The sci-fi obsession of 1950's America spread across all age groups

THE STAFF AT ANDREWS NOTICED THE STRANGE OBJECTS HEADING FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

USAF they didn't have any evidence that these things were extraterrestrial. If they saw something on radar that couldn't be identified, they needed to make sure it wasn't a Russian aircraft or missile. They came up with UFOs to try and get away from the term 'flying saucer'." But it wasn't that easy for Roper to dissociate the public obsession with flying saucers from the objects suspected to be flying over the USA. "What we see is that the phrase 'flying saucer' starts being used less and less, and effectively now UFO means the same as flying saucer," says Clarke.

Despite the investigative efforts of Blue Book, it was shortly before midnight on the night of 19 July 1952 that one of the most sensationalist and bizarre UFO reports of the 1950s occurred. Simultaneously air traffic control at Washington National Airport and Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland noticed a cluster of seven blips, which began moving slowly but soon sped up. At air traffic control, two of the operators looked out of the window and saw a bright light moving across the sky. "Look at that," one said. "If you believe in flying saucers, that could sure be one." Panicked staff at Andrews noticed the strange objects were heading for the capital and the White House, and two F-94 jets were immediately scrambled. Yet as soon as they came close to intercepting the mysterious objects, they simply vanished. "It was these sightings that got Winston Churchill interested," says Clarke. "He fired off a famous memo saying: 'What's all this stuff about flying saucers? Tell me the truth'."

By this point the UFO frenzy was already in full swing. Pulp magazines were brimming with sci-fi flying saucer stories, and the 1951 film *The Day the Earth Stood Still* depicted a flying saucer landing in Washington – preempting the 1952 sightings. However, that movie also highlights another curious aspect of the UFO craze. "In this film you've got the idea that because mankind was in danger of destroying ourselves in a nuclear war that if aliens exist they must care about us," explains Clarke. "They'd be coming here to try and stop this war." In 1953, Polish-born George Adamski collaborated with author Desmond Leslie on the book *Flying Saucers Have Landed*, which details a number of 'true' encounters Adamski had with a visitor from Venus. "It was Nordic-looking, tall, blond, wearing a classic 1950s ski suit," Clarke explains. "It was benevolent, it wanted to save us from destruction. Adamski later went on trips around the solar system to Venus, Mars, Saturn – all the places that we know there is no intelligent life." Nonetheless, Adamski's book was popular and began the 'contactees' movement. "There was a slew of books during the 1950s from people like Adamski who claimed they'd met aliens who were here to help us escape nuclear destruction," says Clarke. "The intelligence services were interested in these people because they often described being taken to a sort of socialist paradise and they thought they were spreading Soviet propaganda."

The remainder of the 1950s was defined by America's obsession with UFOs. There are numerous other sightings this article could have covered, and we've only scratched the surface of this unique period. But the question that remains to be answered is why in 1947 did Americans start watching the skies? "I'm very influenced by the psycho-social hypothesis, a lot of which is associated with a very good British UFO magazine called *Magonia*," says Gill. "We'd just had a war where for the first time we'd had a great deal of air combat. It was very clear that airpower was the future of warfare. You also had people like Ray Palmer who in the 1930s wrote sci-fi and in the 1950s and 1960s was writing 'true' sci-fi stories. It makes total sense that flying saucers came along at this time."

Perhaps, then, the UFO sensation is ultimately a uniquely Cold War phenomenon. "The whole UFO myth emerged from the Cold War," Clarke concludes. "Although there was this general belief in pulp fiction prior to this, they didn't take the form that they did – extraterrestrial visitors in flying disc-shaped objects – until the Cold War. It's a combination of things: the spectre of nuclear war, government secrecy, and people's fears of technology."

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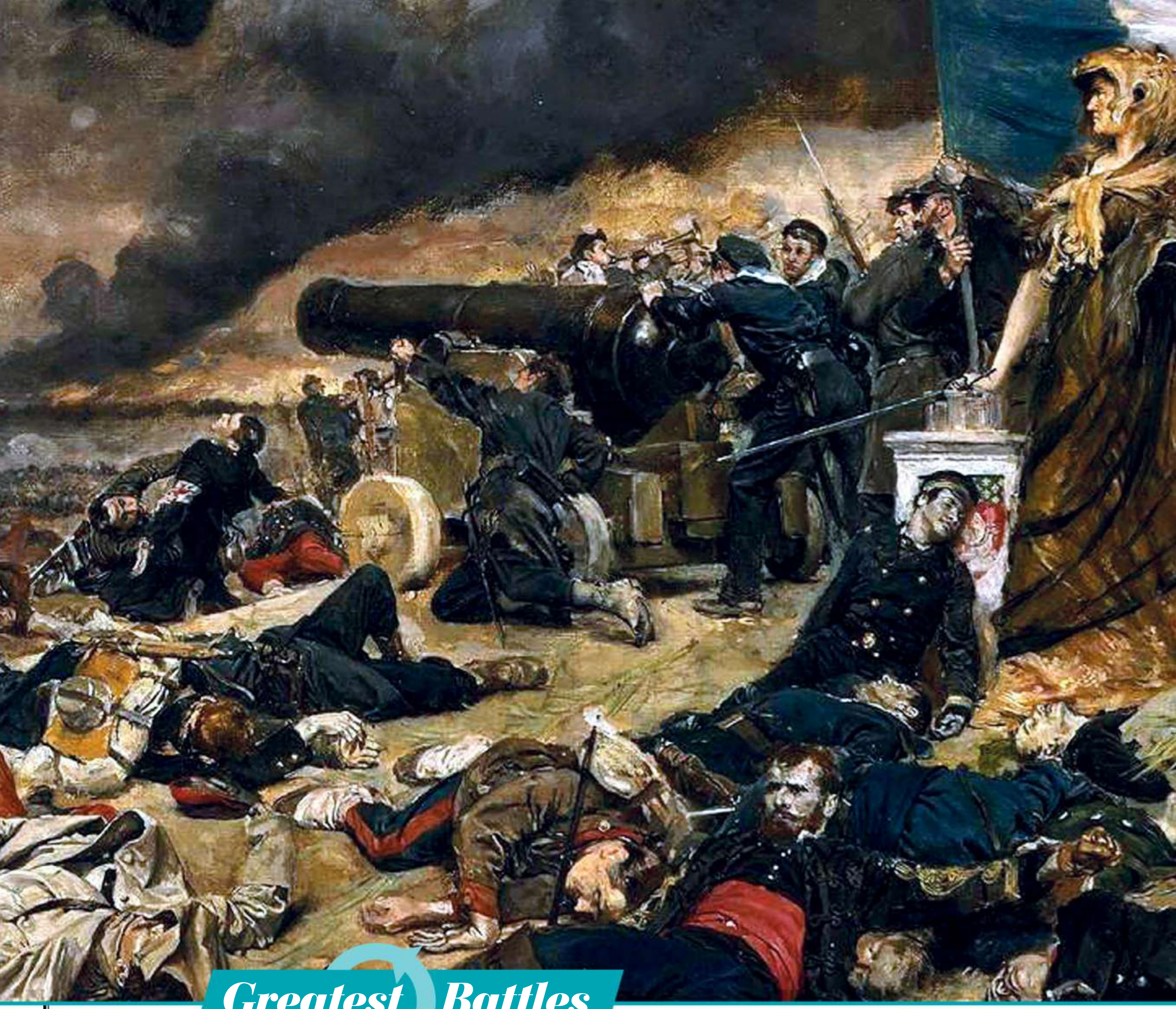

Greatest Battles

SIEGE OF PARIS

PARIS, FRANCE, 19 SEP 1870 – 28 JAN 1871

Written by David Smith

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 is viewed as a precursor to the First World War. It completed the work begun in 1864 (against Denmark) and 1866 (against Austria) in a series of short, sharp conflicts known collectively as the German Wars of Unification. Modern weaponry, especially breech-loading rifles, coupled with fast mobilisation via railway systems gave these wars a distinctly modern feel. At the end of them, the various German states were unified under the leadership of Prussia, and Europe was arguably already on course for the two devastating conflicts of the next century.

In 1864, the Dreyse needle gun, a bolt-action breech-loader, gave the Prussians a clear advantage over their brave but outmatched Danish opponents, while the Austrians failed to capitalise on interior

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lines of communication in 1866. The Prussians had not become invincible, however, despite their frequent depiction as an unstoppable military machine. When Otto von Bismarck provoked the French into war against the German states in 1870, the outcome was far from certain. In fact, the French were viewed as the greater power at the time, having performed well in a series of small overseas conflicts. The French, moreover, had a breech-loading rifle of their own in the form of the Fusil modèle 1866, more commonly known as the Chassepot.

The Second Empire of Napoleon III was well-respected, but its military system was not suited to a large-scale conflict. Its army was professional, but small, and it would take time for conscripts to become effective units. The Prussians had introduced universal military service and their system was already dominant in the northern German states. The Germans also had a far superior staff system, moulded by Helmuth von Moltke, who understood the need to concentrate force and deliver a speedy knockout blow.

The Germans were able to get three large armies mobilised and transported to the front quickly. Commanded by Karl Friedrich von Steinmetz, Prince Frederick Charles and the crown prince of Prussia, they were ready to move while the chaotic French system had regiments and commanders blundering around trying to find each other. Nevertheless, the French were ready to take the field when the first actions took place in August.

The French may have been able to match the Germans with their Chassepot rifles, but artillery was a different matter. The Germans' rifled guns dominated the French muzzle-loaders and the war went badly for Napoleon III, who was ultimately captured following the Battle of Sedan, on 1-2 September, triggering the fall of the Second Empire. A new Government of National Defence was established and entered into talks with Bismarck, but the pugnacious Prussian was not yet ready to end the war and set such harsh terms that the French had little choice but to fight on. Strasbourg and Metz fell, and despite the French performing great feats in mobilising more men, the war came down to a struggle for the capital city.

German units had appeared in front of the Paris defences on 16 September. The city walls were formidable but of an obsolescent design, and the Germans had already forced the capitulation of

'Josephine' battery, manned by Marines, in the Saint-Ouen area outside Paris

many fortresses in a few short weeks, some without any resistance at all. The Paris defences had been augmented over the decades, taking into account improvements in siege artillery. They would have their work cut out against the German guns, which were mounted on newly designed elevated gun carriages, giving them an improved field of fire and also better protection for the gun crews.

Paris had been besieged at least 15 times before, including by Vikings, Romans and the English, and its defensive works had steadily grown in response to the repeated threats. With the city situated in a basin, with various points of high ground around it, it's a poor position for a determined defence. In technical terms, the Paris defences of 1870 consisted of a 'bastioned enceinte' with 98 fronts. The surrounding ditch was about ten metres wide and about six metres deep. The perimeter stretched for 33km, and was split into nine sections, each section having its own commanding officer. There was also a circle of forts built outside the walls, on a perimeter of 58km, intended to stop artillery from getting close enough to bombard the main walls. The most recent of the outer forts had been built 30 years previously, and improved gun ranges had already reduced their value. The walls and external forts had also fallen into disrepair in many places, and the war moved so quickly that by the time it became clear the Germans were going to reach Paris, there was very little time to do much about it.

Still, efforts were made to improve the works, with some gates being closed and bomb-proof shelters being dug, and there were hasty efforts to throw up strongpoints even further away from the city walls to keep enemy artillery at bay. This was still ongoing when the first German units arrived, and they were able to easily take possession of some of the outer works.

There were around 1,350 guns in emplacements around the walls, with a further 600 field guns available, able to be moved around to concentrate in a single area if needed. Running along the interior of the walls was a railway, which allowed men and guns to be moved quickly to a threatened section.

In terms of manpower, the cupboard was not exactly bare, but it was close. There were between 60,000 and 80,000 regulars, along with a large number of Garde-Mobiles (territorials) and around 350,000 National Guardsmen. Under the leadership of General Louis-Jules Trochu, the National Guard was almost completely dismissed, and it wasn't until far too late that he attempted to train them up into useful units.

By 19 September, the investment of Paris was complete. An army of 220,000 sealed off the city. Perhaps surprisingly, the Germans would refrain from bombarding Paris until the following year, but that does not mean the siege was anything other than a traumatic and shocking experience for the two million civilians and soldiers trapped behind those walls.

The Germans may have held back from bombarding the city, but Parisians were still awakened at 4am on 19 September by the ominous sounds of artillery – French guns were attempting to keep the enemy from approaching too close.

The Germans took possession of towns along the southern perimeter, including Versailles, Meudon, Clamart and Bagneux. To the east, they moved close to the outlying forts. Bridges leading to the city had been blown up overnight, but the poor state of the outer defences meant they quickly fell into German hands. The garrisons of these positions were reviled as cowards, but in unfinished structures they could hardly have been expected to resist for long.

The French expected (and hoped for) an immediate assault on their main walls, and they believed that it was only the Germans' strict adherence to scientific principles that prevented them from attempting it. In fact, Moltke had no intention of wasting men in unnecessary frontal assaults on the strong walls of the city, and even a bombardment would not be unleashed with the intention of destroying it. "The object of [a bombardment] would not be to destroy Paris," Moltke would later write, "but merely to exert a final pressure on the inhabitants; and this influence would be more effectual after a long blockade had shaken the resolution of the besieged."

This would be a careful, methodical siege, and there could be only one outcome.

One of the most immediate ordeals for the intelligentsia of Paris was the fact that they were

Hot-air balloons similar to this one were used to communicate with the outside world

An entrenched German artillery battery on the outskirts of the French capital

3x © Getty Images

almost completely isolated from the outside world. Accustomed to being at the heart of global affairs, and considering their city to be the most civilised and advanced in the world, it was a novel and unpleasant experience to be cut off from all news. Imaginative and often fanciful ideas were put forward, from messenger dogs to glass globes floating down the Seine (the old-fashioned 'message in a bottle' approach) but the hot-air balloon proved itself to be the only reliable method. The first balloon took off on 23 September, with another following two days later. The director of the postal service, M Rampont, was impressed (and enterprising) enough to suggest a regular service every two or three days.

Of rather more importance was the departure by balloon of Léon Gambetta, Minister of the Interior in the new Government of National Defence. Gambetta played a key role in the raising of new armies – the fall of the Empire had triggered a wave of national resistance as democracy re-established itself in the form of the Third Republic. Guerrilla bands (francs-tireurs) materialised and began to torment the men guarding the German supply lines, so much so that civilians were executed if their houses were used by snipers.

The Army of the Loire would be the most important of the new National Armies, and it enjoyed some success, recapturing Orléans on 9 November. To the north, the aptly named Army of the North enjoyed some small-scale successes under Louis Faidherbe, a colonial administrator who showed a flair for command. He came unstuck when mounting pressure on Paris forced him to attack at Saint-Quentin, where he suffered catastrophic losses and was effectively knocked out of the war.

Despite these serious efforts to relieve Paris, the city was mostly on its own. Unknown to its inhabitants, a debate was raging at the top of the German command. Bismarck wanted to bombard the city, while Moltke was unwilling to unleash such destruction and potentially turn the opinion of the world against them. As the year wound to a close, starvation became the Germans' most effective weapon.

Controls on food production and pricing were imposed almost as soon as the siege began. It did not take long for horses to be added to the menu, but the needs of the populace were huge. In the early days of the siege, 1,000 sheep and 500 cattle were being slaughtered every day, and by the end the citizens had earned notoriety for unconventional visits to the zoo (the two elephants, Castor and Pollux, being the most famous victims).

Parisians remained upbeat, but hopes that foreign powers would come to France's aid quickly turned to bitterness. The newspapers, still publishing, asked pertinent questions: "Has England forgotten Inkerman?", "Has Italy forgotten Solferino?", "Has America forgotten Lafayette?" On 27 October, the populace was shocked by rumours of the capitulation of Metz, rumours that were quickly

FRENCH

Image source: wiki/Carte de Visite Photo

LOUIS-JULES TROCHU

Trochu was de facto head of state during the Siege of Paris as the President of the Government of National Defense. He had served in the military since his early 20s, serving in Algeria and in Crimea. After repeated promises to never surrender, he was forced to resign his control of Paris as defeat became inevitable.

Image source: wiki/Imperial War Museums

JOSEPH VINOY

Having retired in 1865 at the age of 62, Vinoy was called back into service as the Franco-Prussian War began in 1870. He lead forces in the south of Paris during the siege and when Trochu resigned, control of the city as a whole fell to him and he negotiated surrender. He later took part in the Paris Commune.

GERMAN

Image source: wiki/Vandenhoeck+ruprecht-verlage.com

WILHELM I

The first head of state of a united Germany, victory in Paris also established the German Empire with control over much of northern and central Europe, which lasted until the end of WWI. He was crowned as emperor in the Palace of Versailles.

Image source: wiki/Carte de Visite

HELMUTH VON MOLTKE THE ELDER

A pioneer of modern military methods, Moltke was chief of staff of the Prussian Army for 30 years, commanding in Europe and the Middle East during his long military career. He was a particularly early adopter of railways as a means of moving troops.

Image source: wiki/Odette M. Appel-Heyne

ALBERT OF SAXONY

While king of Saxony, Albert had a successful career with the military, commanding in the First Schleswig War, the Austro-Prussian War and the Franco-Prussian War. He retained control of the German army of occupation after the Treaty of Frankfurt.

confirmed, and the fear grew that Paris might soon be stormed.

Trochu was not an aggressive commander, but he was unwilling to just sit in Paris and wait for the Germans to starve him out. If the Germans wouldn't attack, then the French would. Early, tentative sorties met with enough success to convince the general to draw up an ambitious plan for a major offensive against the German forces to the west of the city. This plan, known as Le Plan Trochu, underwent modification, the most significant of which was that it struck eastwards rather than to the west. On 30 November, French units led by Auguste-Alexandre Ducrot made a significant impact on the German lines, but nowhere near enough to break through. Trochu rallied his men for another assault on 21 December, but this was less successful.

Just days later, on 5 January, the German guns began to fire upon Paris. It had taken this long for them to bring up heavy guns and prepare positions within range of Paris itself. A total of 17 batteries (with 98 guns) opened fire on the south of the city.

By this time, dog, cat and rat had joined horse on the butchers' slab, while frantic attempts were made to find scientific solutions to the insurmountable problems facing the trapped population. Synthesised milk and foodstuffs, fanciful weapons (as well as some genuinely interesting ideas, such as armoured wagons) and more innovative ways of manufacturing gunpowder all offered sparks of hope, but the situation was grim.

"God have mercy on us!" an American eyewitness recorded in his journal. "At this moment the shells are falling near the center of Paris... They fall here and there and everywhere on the south side of the city." As proved the case in the Second World War, however, the attack on a civilian population did not provoke panic or uprising, but rather a bitter stubbornness. "Everyone is filled with rage and no one is alarmed," the American witness noted.

The bombardment could not go unanswered, and Trochu made the last of his great sorties on 19 January, sending 90,000 men to attack the German lines around the Château of Buzenval. The assault was gobbled up by the Germans at a cost of 4,000 casualties, and the French had made their last roll of the dice. After the bombardment of the city intensified, with siege guns now being used against the north of the city as well, the inevitable armistice negotiations were opened.

Peace terms were agreed on 28 January 1871, and were punitive in the extreme. As well as losing Alsace and most of Lorraine (which would remain bones of contention and contributing factors in the start of the First World War), France was also ordered to pay five billion francs in compensation. A 'German Empire' was announced at Versailles, and Bismarck had achieved his goal of uniting Germany under Prussian leadership. The consequences of a militaristic and united Germany would be devastating for Europe and, eventually, the world.

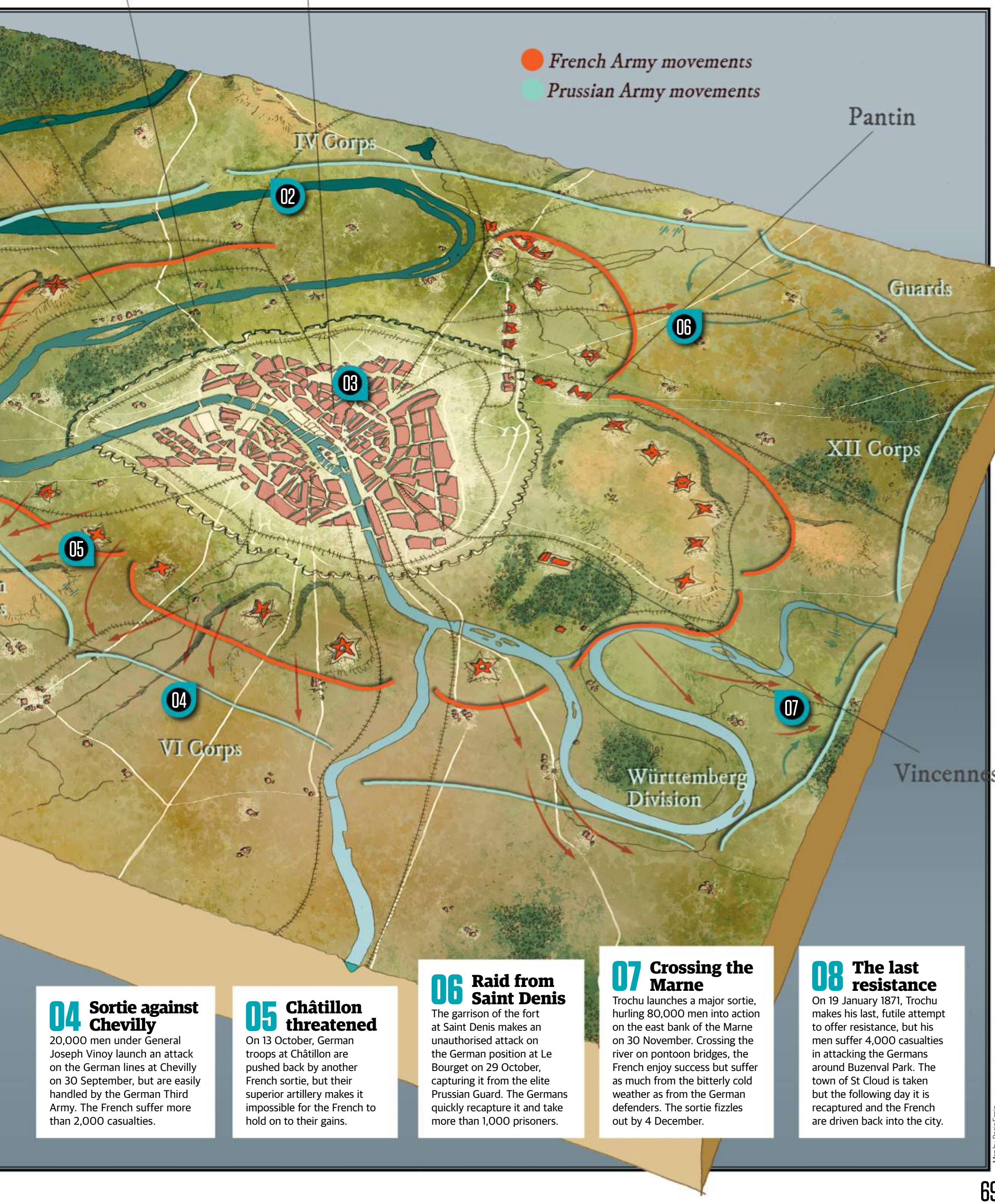
Alphonse de Neuville's painting depicts the fighting at Buzenval

© Getty Images

01 Versailles falls
On 18 September, just days after appearing in front of Paris, the Germans capture Versailles and make it their headquarters for the forthcoming siege. It will also be the setting for the final act of the war, the crowning of the Prussian King Wilhelm I as Emperor of Germany.

02 Paris invested
A day later, the encirclement of Paris is completed (German lines shown in blue). German troops eventually number 400,000, backed by a strong cavalry force, making any breakout by the forces inside the city walls extremely unlikely.

03 The first balloon flight
The first hot-air balloon, the Neptune, takes off from Montmartre on 23 September. Balloons would become a symbol of French defiance and a valuable way of getting news out of the city. The balloons also take carrier pigeons, which bring news back.



04 Sortie against Chevilly

20,000 men under General Joseph Vinoy launch an attack on the German lines at Chevilly on 30 September, but are easily handled by the German Third Army. The French suffer more than 2,000 casualties.

05 Châtillon threatened

On 13 October, German troops at Châtillon are pushed back by another French sortie, but their superior artillery makes it impossible for the French to hold on to their gains.

06 Raid from Saint Denis

The garrison of the fort at Saint Denis makes an unauthorised attack on the German position at Le Bourget on 29 October, capturing it from the elite Prussian Guard. The Germans quickly recapture it and take more than 1,000 prisoners.

07 Crossing the Marne

Trochu launches a major sortie, hurling 80,000 men into action on the east bank of the Marne on 30 November. Crossing the river on pontoon bridges, the French enjoy success but suffer as much from the bitterly cold weather as from the German defenders. The sortie fizzles out by 4 December.

08 The last resistance

On 19 January 1871, Trochu makes his last, futile attempt to offer resistance, but his men suffer 4,000 casualties in attacking the Germans around Buzenval Park. The town of St Cloud is taken but the following day it is recaptured and the French are driven back into the city.

Map by: Rocio Espin

What If...

ENGLAND AND SPAIN HAD UNIFIED?

Despite political rivalry and religious differences, a union of the two ambitious nations could have changed world history for centuries

Interview by David J Williamson

INTERVIEW WITH

DR TRACY BORMAN

Dr Borman is an historian, author, broadcaster and joint chief curator of Historic Royal Palaces. Her latest book is *Crown & Sceptre: A New History of the British Monarchy* (Hodder, 2021)

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With one a dynasty in its infancy and the other a rising star born out of the Holy Roman Empire, any possible union of England and Spain in the 16th century would have been a very winding and bumpy road. Whether through a peaceful marriage alliance or military invasion and suppression, what potentially could've emerged would have been a superpower on a global scale never before seen, propelling Spain and England into an almost invincible position. But accord, compromise and trust would have been vital for any formal union to survive the turbulence of the 16th century.

Would unification have been forged with force or diplomacy? Would it have been possible before Mary I and Philip of Spain?

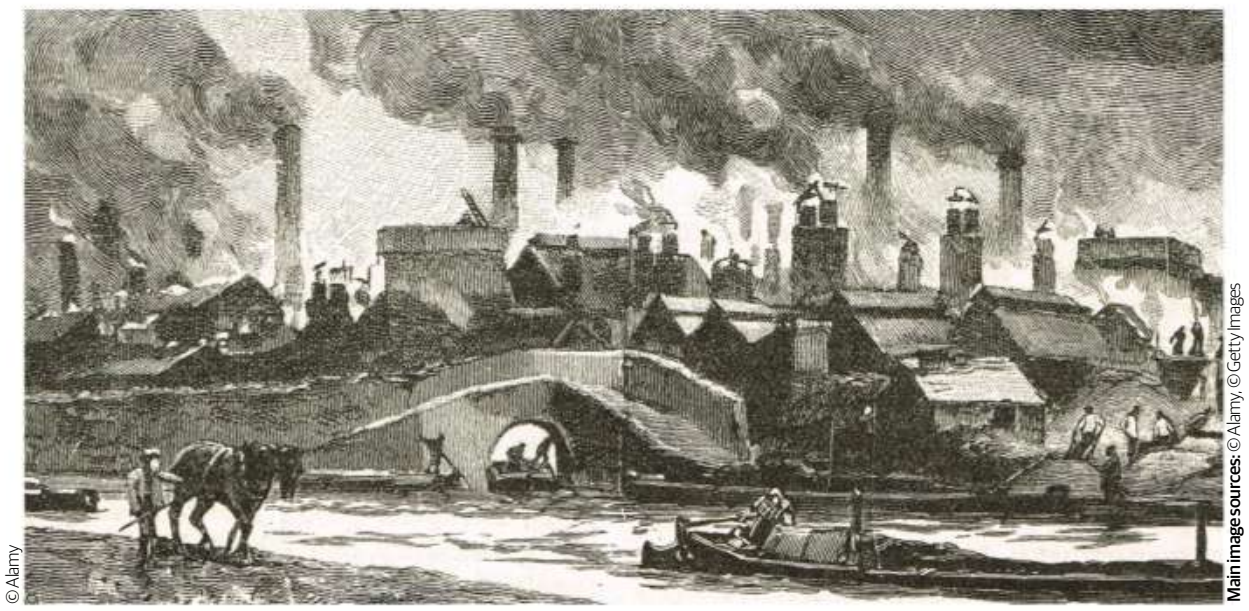
Mary I was not the first Tudor to champion the idea of a union between England and Spain. This had begun with the marriage of her mother, Catherine of Aragon, to Henry VII's eldest son and heir, Arthur, in 1501. The wedding guests were treated to a host of allegorical pageants celebrating the union of the English and Spanish crowns. But when Catherine became queen to Arthur's surviving brother Henry, all the hope, early years of happiness and popularity dissolved into bitterness, isolation and, eventually, the famous annulment of their marriage. Henry fought so hard for that annulment in order to marry Anne Boleyn and in turn rock the very foundations of the Roman Catholic Church. The very thought of unification or alliance with Spain faded into fantasy, at least for a while.

But while the alliance with Spain was certainly beneficial to the fledgling Tudor dynasty, there was never any suggestion of a full union until Mary's marriage to Philip of Spain in 1554. Even then, she failed to persuade parliament to recognise her husband as joint sovereign; they insisted that she be the "sole queen" and that Philip's authority would be strictly prescribed. Their views chimed with those of Mary's subjects. "The English... are most hostile by their nature to foreigners," remarked one ambassador. Stark proof of this came with a popular uprising early in 1554, led by Sir Thomas Wyatt, which aimed "to prevent us from over-running by strangers." So despite the perception we may have of monarchs of this time pleasing themselves (with Henry VIII the prime example!), the overriding power of the people was to prevail. This would be a marker that, should any serious alliance or union be further proposed, opposition, unrest and even rebellion could've been the response from the people of England.

Could it have been an equal alliance? What would each country gain?

England was dwarfed by the might of Spain so there was little prospect of equality. Philip's father, Charles V, had inherited a vast empire that encompassed Germany, Austria, Burgundy, the Netherlands and parts of Italy. Although Philip did not succeed his father as Holy Roman Emperor, he nevertheless inherited a sprawling territory and numerous titles, which made him one of the most powerful rulers in the world. His closest rival was not England, but France.

Arguably, therefore, England had more to gain from an alliance. Having lost most



RIGHT England's industrial future would have been stifled by Spain

© Alamy

Main image sources: © Alamy, © Getty Images

DOVGHTER
VERTVOVS PRI
THE SIGHT
XXVIII YER
ADI MARI
THE MOST
KING HENRI
THE AGE OF

THE PAST

1509-33

NOT A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN

If the marriage of Catherine of Aragon to Arthur, heir to the English throne, was Plan A, with Arthur's death in 1502 there had to be a Plan B to save the marriage alliance, and that was Henry. But for Henry, their daughter Mary was not enough, and this was to be Catherine's downfall. She was the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, but with no son and heir, and his attentions towards Anne Boleyn bordering on the obsessive, Henry set about dismantling his marriage. For him, alliance with Spain was no longer important.

1553-58

RELIGION & RESISTANCE

Following the strictly Protestant reign of her young brother Edward VI, Mary Tudor was determined to reinstate the 'true' religion and beliefs of Roman Catholicism. Mary had Spanish blood running through her veins, and a further, closer, alliance with Spain was increasingly possible with Mary's marriage to the Spanish king, Philip II. But that was still not enough for a cast-iron union with Spain. There was resistance at every turn to allow Phillip to be even joint monarch, and a brief armed uprising plainly demonstrated the resistance of the people.

1558-1603

FROM ALLY TO ENEMY

Like her father Henry VIII, Elizabeth I played political chess with her European neighbours, allying with Spain or France in turn to suit her political needs and ambitions. Philip of Spain supported her ascension to the English throne, and a year after his wife Mary died and Elizabeth became queen he proposed to her, only to be rejected. But from being on the brink of an alliance, Elizabeth's support for the rebels in the Spanish Netherlands and the plundering of Spanish riches from South America by English sea-faring 'adventurers' forced Spain's hand and the Armada was launched.

of its French territories it could even be seen as some form of compensation for such a fall in influence and power in Europe, regaining some respect and prestige even at such a high price as alliance with Spain would be. But England also risked becoming a satellite of Spain, its resources channelled into expensive military campaigns on behalf of Spanish, not English, interests. As an island, it had long enjoyed independence from continental Europe (including a separate church, thanks to Henry VIII), but this would've come to an abrupt – and bloody – end if the two kingdoms had united.

What would have been the implications for religion for both sides? Would it have been persecution or compromise? And what unrest could've been expected?

With Spain as the dominant partner, England would have in theory returned to the Roman Catholic fold, with the Church of England abolished and the pope holding sway once more. But even the staunchly Roman Catholic Mary I had failed to achieve that, despite burning hundreds of 'heretics' and enlisting the help of Catholic powerhouses such as Cardinal Reginald Pole. What she failed to appreciate was just how deeply embedded her father's Reformation had become. At least half of the population was Protestant, and even many Catholics were against the idea of re-joining the Roman Catholic Church – especially those who had profited from the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Elizabeth I herself was a Protestant and had refused to convert to Catholicism

ABOVE
A joint English and Spanish navy would dominate the world

LEFT-INSET
Elizabeth's succession would have jeopardised a union forged by Mary I

LEFT
Gold from the New World would finance the new empire

during Mary's reign, even under threat of execution, so it is unlikely that she and Philip would have reached a compromise. By the middle of the following century, the strength of feeling against Catholicism led to civil war in England. Suffice it to say, religion would have been the thorniest of all the issues to be resolved in a union between the two countries.

What impact would it have had on the balance of military and political power in Europe? Which states stood to lose the most from such an alliance? (And what about Scotland!?)
Throughout the Tudor period, power in Europe had been finely balanced between France and Spain, with England allying with one or the other according to the shifting circumstances. A permanent union with Spain would have seriously disrupted this. The complex web of European diplomacy is unlikely to have been enough to hold back open aggression. With so much territory already controlled by Spain, the addition of England to the fold would have been potentially overwhelming and the ensuing conflicts would've changed the political, social and geographical landscape of Europe forever.

Scotland united with England upon the death of Elizabeth I in 1603, when James VI of Scotland was her closest blood relative. But if England had united with Spain during Elizabeth's reign, that union might not have happened at all – at least not willingly on Scotland's part. Scotland had always cherished its independence from England and the Scots would have likely been even more averse to a Spanish alliance because of the so-called 'auld alliance' between Scotland and France. With France as Spain's enemy number one this may in itself have drawn Scotland into a much wider European conflict anyway and open a battle line on England's northern border. Then there was the issue of religion: Protestantism was even more firmly established in Scotland than in England, so if Spain had wanted to bring Scotland into the union with England it would have had to do so by force.

What kind of global force would have been created in territory, trade and influence and what impact would that have had on future history?
It would have been something approaching a superpower. England was a small country but it was a rich one, so it could have financed Spanish aggression, enabling this newly formed empire to acquire even more territories. England and Spain were already the most powerful forces in trade, so if they had united they would have dominated nearly every trade route across the globe. The repercussions of this would have reached far into the future – but not necessarily to England's glory. By the 19th century England – or rather Britain – led the world in trade and industry and had a vast empire. If it had united with Spain then it might have enjoyed joint influence earlier, but with Spain as the dominant partner its own influence through language and culture – and identity – would have been suffocated.

What trade-offs/compromises would have been needed to make it work?
The number-one compromise would've been religion. It lay at the heart of everything: war, politics, finance and, ultimately, power. Elizabeth I proved how important it was to achieve compromise in religion, but as soon as her reign ended and there was no longer such a skilful leader on the throne, it rose to the fore again – with disastrous results. With such divergent views between England and Spain it's hard to see how such a compromise could've been achieved. It was hard enough achieving it within England itself!

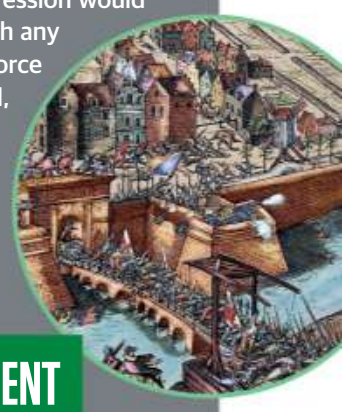
If England and Spain had united during Elizabeth's reign, each would have needed to retain a separate monarch. Such an arrangement would have required a huge level of trust on both sides, something that was in short supply among monarchs in the 16th century. But upon her death without direct heirs, Philip could have claimed the English throne fully for himself and his descendants, leaving a Spanish Empire with the entire world at its feet.

THE POSSIBILITY

1553 – PRESENT

WAR WAR, NOT JAW JAW

Any formal alliance between Spain and England would have had deep political and religious repercussions throughout Europe. Any balance of power involving France would have been seriously undermined. The imposition of strict Catholic beliefs by Spain as the dominant partner in the alliance with England would have caused constant unrest. Persecution and oppression would be the order of the day, with any resistance met with the full force of the new empire's financial, political and military power. Europe would've become a battleground as new alliances were made and old ones broken.



1553 – PRESENT

TAKING A DIFFERENT LINE

In the 16th century even royal marriages were no guarantee of a strong line of succession. But what if things had been different? If Mary and Philip had had children, and in particular a male heir, then there would have been no Elizabethan era. If Elizabeth had decided to marry Philip after all and they had children, or Philip decided to introduce his own heirs after her death, then the succession of James VI of Scotland as James I of England would have been in doubt. There would've been no Charles I, and so no English Civil War. The entire course of British and European history would have been different.

1553 – PRESENT

A NEW WORLD ORDER

Had Spain and England unified and pooled their resources, wealth, expansionist ambitions and trade links, there would've emerged a global superpower on a scale never seen before. Both knew the value of trade and the wealth it brought. But as its master the Spanish Empire would always have held its English terrier on a very tight leash. English influence around the world through culture and most notably language would've been stifled and English innovation and invention, along with its pride, would've been robbed by Spain as if gold bullion on the high seas.

All images: © Alamy

Through History

THE WORLD OF STONEHENGE

A new exhibit explores the ancient monument in the context of the prehistoric era in which it was built

Main image: © Getty Images

Located in Wiltshire, England, the 83 remaining stones that form a circle known as Stonehenge are one of the most famous and instantly recognisable historical sites of ancient human civilisation. In the words of UNESCO: "Stonehenge is the most architecturally sophisticated prehistoric stone circle in the world... unrivalled in its design and unique engineering." Even today, thousands of years after the monument was built, people still gather at the ancient site to celebrate the summer and winter solstice.

For years people have speculated as to the true nature and purpose of Stonehenge. Many thought it was a burial ground, while others posed theories that ranged from a coronation site for Danish kings to an early 'astronomical computer'. However, most experts now agree that it was a religious site precisely aligned with the position of the sun.

Now, the British Museum is hoping to put Stonehenge in the context of its time. Telling the story of Britain and Europe from 4000 BCE to 1000 BCE, the museum's new exhibition will explore the religious and social beliefs and practices held by Neolithic people. For this exhibition some 430 objects are being brought together from across Europe including, for the first time, the loan of Seahenge and the oldest surviving map of the stars, the Nebra sky disc.

SEAHENGE

Discovered in 1998, this timber circle would originally have been built on the salt marsh away from the sea. Comprising of 55 oak posts standing three metres high, the circle was removed from the beach shortly after its discovery and is on display in the Lynn Museum, Norfolk.

© Wendy George

JADEITE AXE HEAD

This highly polished axe head comes from northern Italy and is made from jadeite. Axes made from this stone have been found across Europe, though likely most were made in the area around Monte Visto – a mountain that is thought to have had important spiritual significance.

© The Trustees of the British Museum

BRONZE HYBRID HORSE-SERPENT

This object, part of the Kallerup Hoard from Jutland in Denmark, may have been used as part of a staff in religious ceremonies. Objects such as this offer an insight into how ancient peoples, such as those who built Stonehenge, may have worshipped their gods.

© National Museum of Denmark/Ofret Museum. CC-BY-SA, Søren Greve, National Museum of Denmark

GOLDEN HAT

This strange hat is made from a single piece of extremely thin gold alloy and was discovered in 1835 in southwest Germany – three other similar hats have been unearthed across northern Europe. Dating from somewhere between 1200 BCE to 800 BCE, experts think that it was used by a priest as part of the sun cult that was widespread across Western Europe during the time of Stonehenge.

© Historisches Museum der Pfalz Speyer

STONEHENGE AND AVEBURY

Stonehenge was constructed in several stages, the first being built about 5,000 years ago. The most famous part – the large stone circle – was erected in around 2500 BCE. However, the stone circle at nearby Avebury is actually much bigger and is considered the largest monument of its type in the world.

© English Heritage

THE BUILDING OF STONEHENGE

▼ The largest stone, the 'heel stone', weighs around 30 tons, and some are much larger than they initially appear due to being partially buried in the ground. Some of the smaller stones, the bluestones, were dragged 240km to Wiltshire from South Wales.

© English Heritage

MOLD GOLD CAPE

◀ This is considered to be one of the finest examples of prehistoric sheet-gold work ever found. It was discovered in a Bronze Age burial mound at Mold in Flintshire, Wales, in 1833, and is thought to have been worn during some form of ceremony.

© The Trustees of the British Museum

SUN DISC

▶ This would most likely have been worn on a woman's belt. Its elaborate decoration is similar in meaning to that of the Golden Hat (top-left), with the raised point in the middle representing the sun and the shapes radiating from this showing the sun's power.

© Frederiksborg Amtand Vellinge, Fyn, Denmark. CC-BY-SA, Roberto Fortuna & Kira Ursem, National Museum of Denmark

REVIEWS

The books, TV shows and films causing a stir in the history world this month

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MY BEST FRIEND ANNE FRANK

Anne Frank's tragic story is told from a fresh perspective

Director: Ben Sombogaart **Cast:** Josephine Arendsen, Aiko Beemsterboer, Lottie Hellingman **Released:** Out now

This Dutch production, the first one made about Anne Frank in her homeland, is actually the second screen adaptation of Alison Leslie Gold's *Memories of Anne Frank: Reflections of a Childhood Friend* (1997), coming after an Italian version filmed back in 2009. Novelist and non-fiction writer Gold based her book on the recollections of Hannah Goslar (played by Josephine Arendsen) and with whom Frank struck up a close friendship during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. Mixed in with this is Hannah's wretched existence in the Bergen-Belsen camp in the last days of the war, with typhus fever running rampant and prisoners starving to death, where the teenager must take care of her baby sister, Gabi, who doesn't understand what is happening and is prone to walking off at roll call or stealing bits of food on impulse.

My Best Friend Anne Frank is middle-of-the-road fare that means well, is heartfelt and has good production values, but ultimately resorts too often to Holocaust movie cliché; it's complete with a didactic strings-led score and scenes of barking SS goons executing running prisoners in the street or across the mud of a concentration camp. A more artfully focused work might have made it a more intimate affair that draws its emotional power from a tight bond forged and then abruptly destroyed, rather than offer up scenes we've seen countless times before and, unless presented in raw and shocking fashion, have lost much of their impact. There is a sense the producers demanded a movie as conventional as possible.

What rescues director Ben Sombogaart's film from mediocrity is the excellent performances by the cast, especially Arendsen and Aiko Beemsterboer as Hannah and Anne. They anchor *My Best Friend Anne Frank* with their charm and likeability, and there is also genuine delight in taking the opportunity to present the wartime diarist and 20th century literary icon as a very ordinary teenage girl. The less prim side to Frank's personality was censored for a long time, her father cutting out bits of her diary that he deemed improper or embarrassing in order to preserve his daughter's cherished image. Here, she's interested in boys, swears, enjoys grossing out her squeamish friend with a sex education book, and dreams of travelling the world. What's also well done is the warm but not hagiographic presentation of a friendship, because it portrays their petty jealousies and occasional rivalries.

My Best Friend Anne Frank, imperfect as it is, is commendable for showing the writer without the tragic symbolism or the weight of history. While hit and miss, its lead performances and intriguing view of Anne shine as other elements falter and fall flat.

The definitive Anne Frank film is yet to be made. Once directors free themselves of the mainstream historical biopic's obligations, it might well happen, and there is the sense this film had the ambition to do such a thing but the commercial demands of movie-making required it to conform to middlebrow type. ***MC***

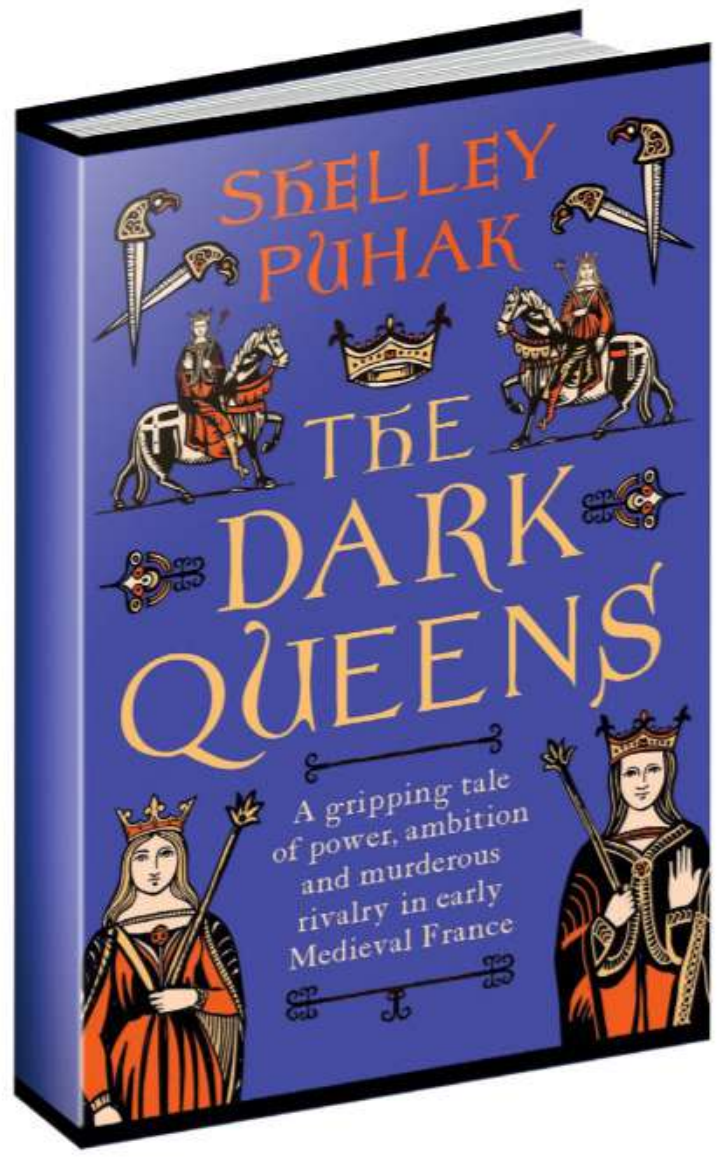
★★★☆☆

Reviews by
Martyn Conterio, Catherine Curzon, Callum McKelvie

THE DARK QUEENS

The bloody, eye-opening story of two forgotten women

Author: Shelley Puhak **Publisher:** Head of Zeus **Price:** £9.99 **Released:** Out now



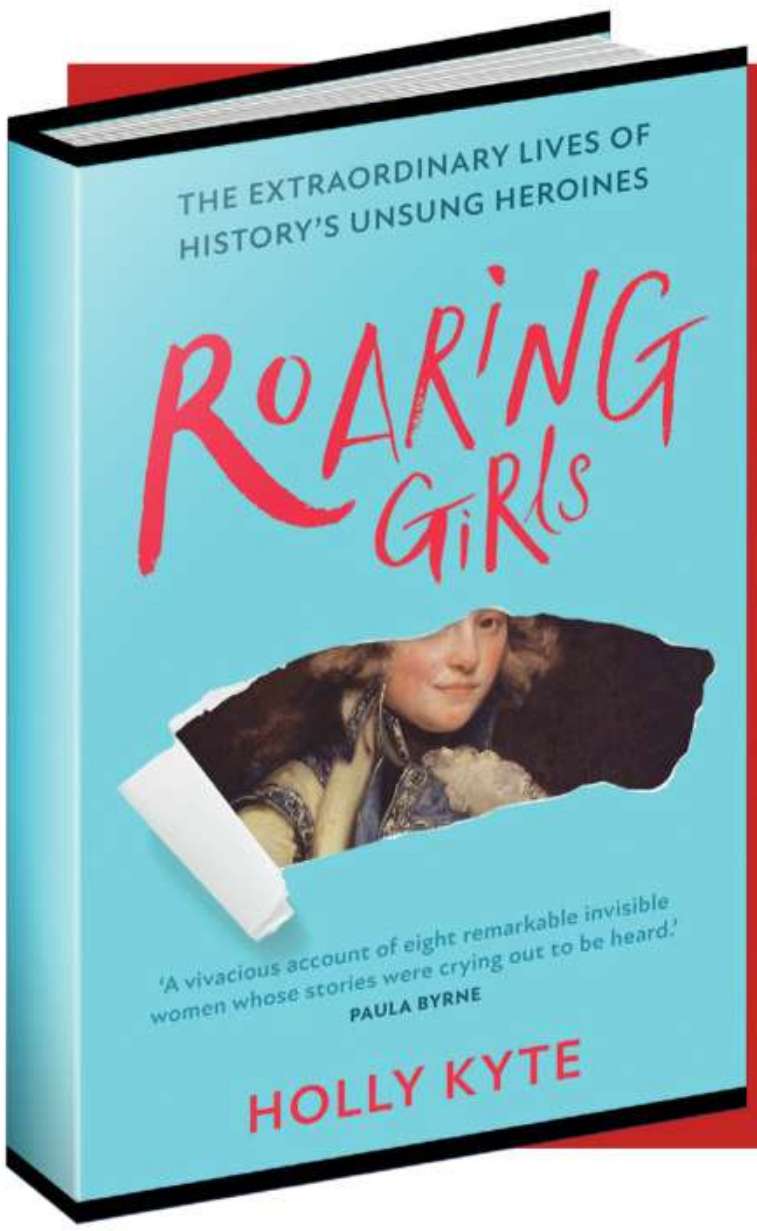
In *The Dark Queens*, Shelley Puhak sets out to tell the true story of Brunhild and Fredegund, sisters-in-law who vied for the upper hand in sixth-century Merovingian France. One started life as a princess, the other as a slave, but each rose to the top, celebrated as politicians and strategists as they navigated their respective forces through a bitter civil war that lasted for decades.

The women battled one another for years and their clashes shaped the continent in the early Middle Ages, but today they are largely forgotten. Where they are remembered, they are cyphers, their stories shaped by legend and liberally sprinkled with fiction. Using primary sources, Puhak attempts to hack through the legends to reveal the truth. In doing so, she uncovers a story that is more thrilling and stranger than any fiction.

The Dark Queens attempts not only to tell the true story of Brunhild and Fredegund, but also to examine exactly why they came to be regarded as the model of the wicked stepmother or evil queen. In doing so, this ambitious book sometimes walks a fine line between academic text and narrative nonfiction, though Puhak handles this deftly. She also handles an enormous cast of characters and some very complex politics with aplomb, keeping the story moving at a breakneck pace without ever losing sight of her subjects.

This is a fascinating book that will appeal not only to those who have an interest in the Middle Ages but also anyone who loves reading about the cut-and-thrust of court politics and ambition laid bare. ***CC***

★★★★★


THE EXTRAORDINARY LIVES OF HISTORY'S UNSUNG HEROINES
ROARING GIRLS
'A vivacious account of eight remarkable invisible women whose stories were crying out to be heard.'
PAULA BYRNE
HOLLY KYTE

ROARING GIRLS: THE EXTRAORDINARY LIVES OF HISTORY'S UNSUNG HEROINES

A wonderful celebration of some remarkable women

Author: Holly Kyte **Publisher:** HQ **Price:** £10.99 **Released:** Out now

In *Roaring Girls: The extraordinary lives of history's unsung heroines*, Holly Kyte takes us on a whistle-stop tour through several centuries, stopping along the way to meet some remarkable women who have been brushed under the carpet.

In these eight short but impeccable biographies, Kyte celebrates the impact these woman had on society both in their day and in the years to follow. Along the way she introduces us to characters as diverse as thief and performer Mary Frith (aka Moll Cutpurse), abolitionist Mary Prince, and Gentleman Jack herself Anne Lister. Though Lister is far from one of the unsung women of the subtitle, her inclusion makes perfect sense in this history of British feminists. What emerges from these pages are stories of women who pushed the boundaries to tread their own paths, sometimes against the most extreme resistance from society, authority and even those closest to them.

Kyte's book is clearly a labour of love and her characters spring into life in these richly researched biographies. She also offers a wealth of context, pinpointing exactly what made each candidate deserving of their spot in the book. With simple portraits accompanying each chapter and exhaustive notes lending further depth, *Roaring Girls* will appeal to a wide range of readers, particularly those looking for a primer on British women's history. It is highly accessible, boundlessly entertaining and a fitting tribute to the women who feature. ***CC***

★★★★★

Real History of the Peaky Blinders

Discover the fascinating historical events, heroes and villains that have inspired the dark and dangerous world of one of the greatest crime dramas, Peaky Blinders. In this special edition, we'll meet the real-life gang that inspired the show and reveal life in interwar Britain, exploring the context of its setting.

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HISTORY of WAR **RECOMMENDS...**

Solferino 21

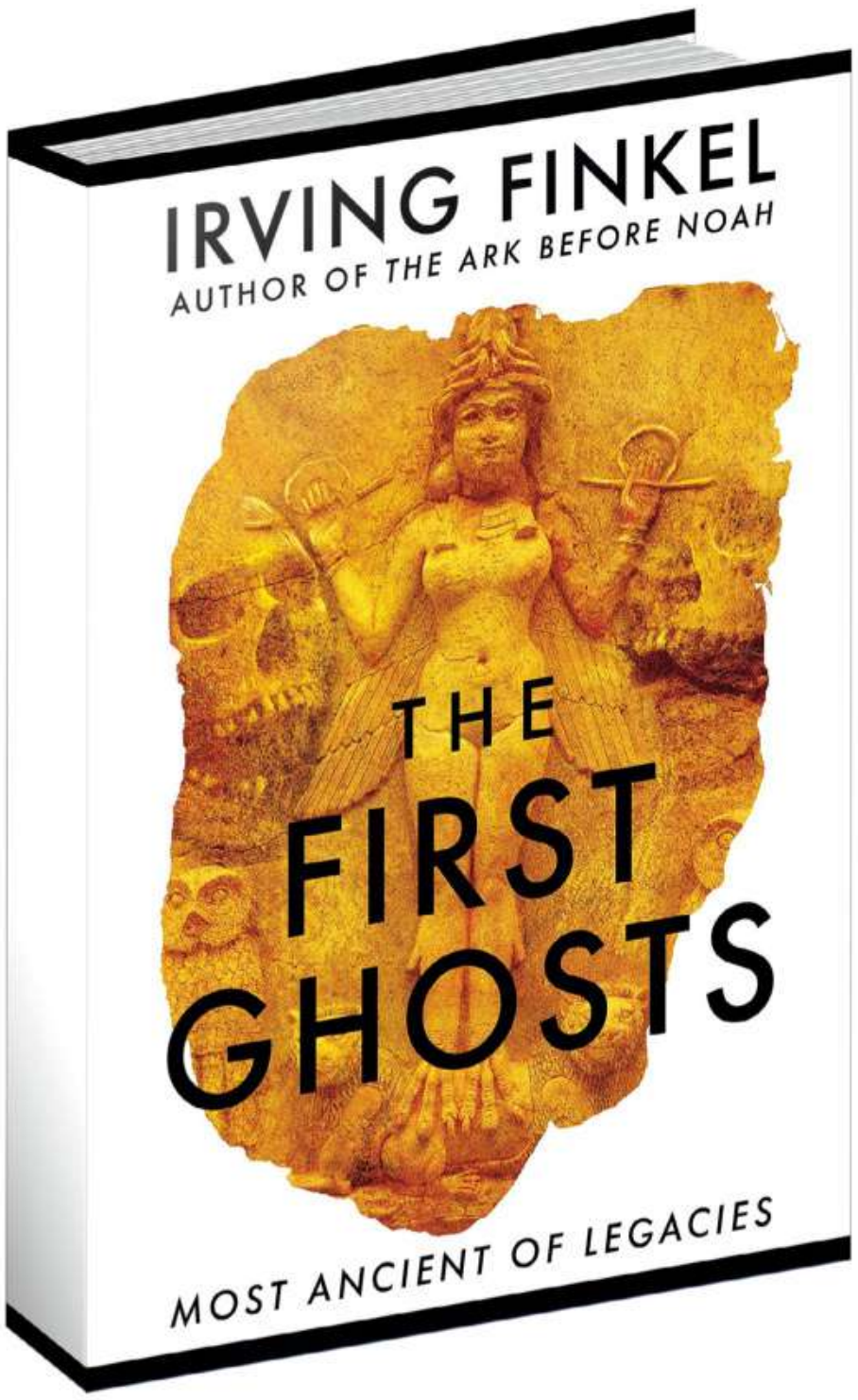
Author Hugo Slim **Price** £16.99 **Publisher** Hurst & Co

Hugo Slim uses Solferino as the starting point for his well-researched narrative about war and humanitarian aid in contemporary times and how we should prepare for what the future holds. Slim insists that global humanitarian aid must evolve quickly to meet the challenge of warfare and great power rivalry during the current climate emergency. This will require an emphasis on greater humanitarian cooperation at national and global levels to help millions of people survive any future conflict.

THE FIRST GHOSTS

A hauntingly good examination of ancient Mesopotamia's belief in all things spooky

Author: Irving Finkel **Publisher:** Hodder & Stoughton **Price:** £19.99 **Released:** Out Now



"A book for students of ancient history and lovers of supernatural phenomena alike"

Everybody loves a good old-fashioned ghost story. Be it seasonal classics such as Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* or famous chillers such as Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, or more modern frights like Stephen King's *The Shining*, ghosts have obsessed us for generations. But when did this obsession with wandering spirits begin? How long has it been with us? In short, what were the 'first ghosts?' This is the question that Dr Irving Finkel seeks to answer in his book of the same name, examining the belief in spirits held by ancient Mesopotamian cultures and comparing them to our own fascination with ghosts.

A respected Assyriologist, Finkel is senior assistant keeper of the British Museum's cuneiform archives and a specialist in the history of cuneiform. He uses these tablets to build up a picture of the ancient world's beliefs surrounding ghosts, and it's a picture that he paints in an engaging and snappy way.

Admittedly, Ancient Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian cultures are not areas of history that this reviewer can claim to have any in-depth knowledge of and we were concerned that it might require some frequent googling. Fortunately, we couldn't have been more wrong. Finkel provides the reader with the necessary background without being patronising or giving the impression of having overly simplified things. This is a book that can be enjoyed by the academic but which is aimed at the enthusiast, no doubt because so many of us seem to be obsessed with ghosts.

Additionally, Finkel avoids overly long or irrelevant tangents and the book that results is concise, taut and accessible. While the odd diversion can be engaging and informative, in our opinion modern popular history writers can sometimes suffer from a lack of focus. Finkel's success lies in keeping his subject matter in sharp focus and elegantly breaking down the sections of his discussion to keep it easy to follow.

What is pleasantly surprising about *The First Ghosts* is Finkel's openness towards his chosen topic. Ghosts are not always a subject treated with much sympathy by the academic, but Finkel chooses to chart an often forgotten period of humanity's obsession with the paranormal with a refreshingly sensitive view towards people's belief in ghosts. He explores why we have always held these beliefs regarding spirits and the afterlife (with many continuing to do so) without ever letting it overshadow the main purpose of his treatise. Despite confronting the fear we all have concerning what happens when life reaches its end, this is not a sombre or depressing book and maintains its vitality throughout.

Given its subject matter, *The First Ghosts* is a surprisingly light read but one which should not fail to engage any reader. For students of ancient history and lovers of supernatural phenomena alike, this is a fascinating and incredibly well-written work which cannot be recommended highly enough for its excellent insight as well as its accessibility. ***CM***

★★★★★

HISTORY VS HOLLYWOOD

Fact versus fiction on the silver screen

A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

Director: Penny Marshall **Starring:** Geena Davis, Lori Petty, Tom Hanks **Country:** USA **Released:** 1992

A heart-string tugging sports drama inspired by a real piece of history

VERDICT: A mostly fictional story, but a lot of the key details are based in reality

01 The film is inspired by the real story of the women's baseball league established during WWII while the male players fought overseas. It was set up by chewing gum magnate Philip K Wrigley, replaced in the film by a chocolate businessman named Walter Harvey.

02 We follow sisters Dottie and Kit through the film. Both characters are fictional, but Dottie may be based on star player Dorothy 'Kammie' Kamenshek. She was an outfielder for the Rockford Peaches, not a catcher, and played for ten seasons, not just one like Dottie.

03 When it began in 1943, the league resembled softball more than baseball. The smaller balls and overhand pitching of men's baseball were gradually introduced. Wrigley insisted the players went to charm school as he wanted to emphasise their femininity.

04 As in the film, the women weren't too impressed with the uniforms. The short skirts didn't offer much protection when sliding into a base and bruises, known as 'strawberries' by the players, were a common occurrence. The uniforms were designed by Wrigley's wife.

05 Kit switches teams to the Belles and wins the title against the Peaches, knocking over her sister to reach home plate. The Belles did win the title in 1943, but they didn't play the Peaches (who actually finished last) and there was no sibling rivalry involved.

Main image: © Alamy
5x inset image source: Columbia Pictures

Main image: © Alamy
Inset image: © Getty Images

Did you know?
The cheese can also be served on the side, with syrup or jam

KAFFEOST

COFFEE CHEESE TO WELCOME GUESTS, SÁPMI REGION, 18TH CENTURY – PRESENT

Ingredients
- 2 litres whole milk
- 60ml heavy cream
- 2 tsp rennet
- Coffee of your choice

After coffee had been introduced to Europe around the late 16th century, various ways of serving this fascinating, exotic beverage from the Middle East began to pop up. One of the most curious, which remains a regional delicacy today, is kaffeost, or coffee cheese. Originating with the Saami people of the northern Scandinavian regions of Finland, Sweden and Norway, this unusual food combo is something of an acquired taste!

Traditionally the coffee that is used in kaffeost is incredibly dark and strong. The cheese, called leipäjuusto (meaning bread cheese), is also known as 'Finnish squeaky cheese' and is made from reindeer milk or goat milk. It's a sturdy cheese, which means it doesn't melt in the hot coffee and instead soaks up the liquid for a unique flavour combination.

METHOD

01 Mix the milk and cream together and then pour into a large saucepan, at least three litres in capacity, to begin heating it on a stove.

02 If the rennet is in tablet form, prepare it by dissolving the tablets in some distilled water. This should take about 15 minutes.

03 Heat the mixture until it's lukewarm, around 37°C, and then remove from the heat. Stir in the rennet and leave the mixture to stand for 30 to 40 minutes until it has curdled.

04 Begin to reheat the mixture, stirring gently, back to its lukewarm temperature, taking care to move the curds from the edge of the pan and keeping them in the centre as much as possible.

05 Once collected in the centre, increase the heat to boiling point, removing from the heat just before the whey begins to boil. This should heat the curds, helping them to stick together later.

06 Place mixture in a large strainer or cheese mold. A mesh strainer can be used, but something finer like cheese cloth would be better. This can be left to strain for several hours, perhaps overnight, to remove as much of the moisture as possible.

07 Hopefully, you are now left with cheese that is at least 3cm thick.

08 One optional step is to preheat your oven to 200°C (400F, Gas Mark 6) and bake the cheese in an ovenproof dish in the centre of the oven until it is golden brown. Wrap the edges in tin foil first if you want to keep them soft.

09 Allow the cheese to cool and then cut it into cubes, about the same size as a sugar cube. Place some cubes in a coffee mug and pour over a freshly brewed coffee – the stronger the better!

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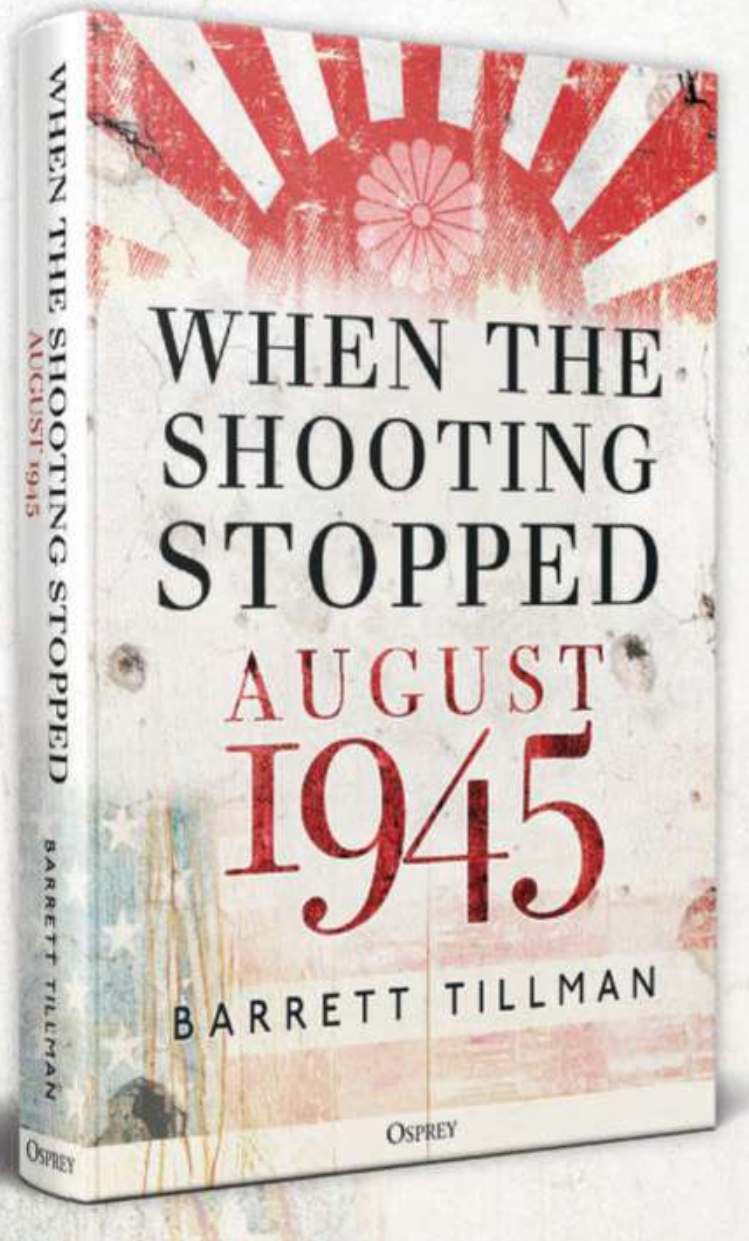
WHEN THE SHOOTING STOPPED

AUGUST 1945



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